

## Automobile Industry Targeting Women Consumers

Gears are finally shifting in the automotive marketing world's attitudes towards women. A recent article in *Advertising Age* [<http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/long-soccer-mom-carmakers-shift-marketing-aimed-women/294100/>] highlighted major car companies' efforts to target the modern-day woman through media campaigns that put the brakes on soccer-mom clichés. Gone is the Stepford-esque wife whose only purpose in a car ad was to chauffeur her children around town while showing off her classic minivan. Rather, manufacturers today are taking women more seriously by casting them in nontraditional roles and shifting the focus onto substantial features such as technology and high-speed performance, which were previously thought to only be of interest to men.

Take for example Ford, who found an unlikely partner to promote its Fusion model. Teaming up for a sweepstakes contest with Rent the Runway, a women's fashion rental company, demonstrated the automaker's clear intentions to appeal to the female gender. Ford's out-of-the-box approach is reflected in its Energized Differentiation scores, which rose 15 points since 2012. Furthermore, attempts to engage the female audience are evident in its steadily-climbing Relevance scores among women who own or lease cars (*see Ford chart at the end of this article*).

The Cadillac 2014 SRX remake is another instance of real transformation in advertising's perspective on women. Take a look at the spot [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJb8yr07V9E>] of Cadillac's recent twist on a 2005 "Stacy's Mom" commercial for Dr. Pepper. Though the same soundtrack plays in both ads, the similarity ends there. While nine years ago Dr. Pepper's version of Stacy's mom happily doled out sodas to a group of boys as if it were her sole purpose in life, Cadillac's reinvented parent drives her daughter to school on the way to work. Quite noticeably, the woman's mom-cut and tennis shoes have been replaced with a stylish hairdo and chic pantsuit; however, the biggest change is the vehicle itself, which has switched from egg-mobile to luxury SUV. Women are clearly taking notice of the newfound respect they are finally receiving from the brand, as Cadillac's Esteem scores have increased over time (*see Cadillac chart at the end of this article*).

Another bold video Halpert brings to our attention is Nissan's "Commute" commercial [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpzbJqkd9i8>] for its 2014 Rogue model. Reversing gender and even ethnic hierarchy stereotypes, a female, not to mention Hispanic, professional takes center stage as she effortlessly maneuvers a sleek SUV across challenging terrain in order to get herself and two male colleagues to a meeting on time. By acknowledging women's capabilities in its ad, Nissan is also realizing women's potential as a serious consumer base. The new focus of the brand's marketing campaign has not gone unnoticed—Esteem scores have spiked dramatically in the past year, and both Relevance and Energized Differentiation have been on the rise since 2012 (*see Nissan chart at the end of this article*).

Foregoing gender conventions has not been confined to the automotive industry. Recently, Tide and Downy, both P&G brands, aired a commercial [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCYwAOCLiTA>] narrated by a stay-at-home Dad who explains how despite a messy daughter, the products make his

laundry responsibilities a breeze. Ads such as these demonstrate that media is finally catching up with the times. Though much room for growth remains, we can expect the trend to continue as marketers hone their appeals to the realistic needs and desires of 21<sup>st</sup> century consumers.

