

From "Mard" to "Admi": ASCI Report highlights need for an expanded and multifaceted movement in men's depictions.

Mumbai, 19th March 2025: The Advertising Standards Council of India's Academy (ASCI), in collaboration with the Unstereotype Alliance (convened by UN women) and knowledge partners Religious Brands, today unveiled "**Manifest: Masculinities Beyond the Mask**," a report examining the evolving landscape of masculinities in society and media. Released at ASCI Academy's Global Adda during the ICAS Global Dialogues Summit, this study calls for a more nuanced and varied pathways for depiction of men.

The report addresses the "crisis" of traditional masculinity, where men feel increasingly alienated and insecure amidst societal changes and the rise of gender equality, and studies and offers alternative pathways for more inclusive and diverse depictions.

The study is part of the thought leadership work at ASCI Academy which is supported by Diageo, Hindustan Unilever Mondelez, Nestle, Cipla Health, Coca-Cola, Colgate, Games24X7, Pepsico, P&G, Kenvue, Bajaj Auto, and Dream Sports.

"**Manifest: Masculinities Beyond the Mask**" is based on an extensive analysis of over 29 literary and scholarly articles, 170 pieces of media, over 70 articles, and sociological data reports, and expert interviews. The research investigates the complex and evolving landscape of masculinities in India, offering a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of the diverse realities of men and their experiences. The study presents advertisers and media with insights to create more progressive, relatable, and effective narratives

The report highlights that the traditional, often inflexible narrative of masculinity is fracturing, leading to a "crisis" where many men feel insecure, confused, and alienated amidst rapid societal changes.

Key Takeaways from the Report:

- Men are caught between diverse narratives and none of them offer both a sense of purpose and a sense of progress.
- Traditional notions of success, norms of breadwinning and providership remain core tenets of Indian masculinity. It may be meaningful to move away from narratives that reinforce the relentless pursuit of success, and normalise failure for men.
- Many Indian men are striving for upward mobility and need positive frameworks for expressing strength.
- The evolution of masculinity necessitates broadening its scope and contextualising core identity values.

- The overarching goal is to nudge media to move beyond the limited idea of "Mard" to the fullness of "Admi," celebrating diverse forms of masculinity.

Manisha Kapoor, Secretary General and CEO, ASCI said, *"Building on ASCI's long-standing commitment to fostering progressive representations within advertising, this report delves into the fascinating and often complex world of masculinities, moving beyond superficial portrayals to understand the diverse realities of men today. Our endeavour is to provoke new thoughts and frameworks to create progress in society and for men."*

Susan Ferguson, Country Representative at UN Women India Country Office, added, *"The Unstereotype Alliance, convened by UN Women, promotes portrayals of both men and women that do not fit the usual stereotypes. Breaking toxic masculinities in media and advertising is not just good for society—it is good for business. The Manifest report, published in collaboration with the Advertising Standards Council of India and Religious Brands, provides valuable insights into men's roles in modern society. These insights can help advertisers and marketers use realistic and broader portrayals of women and men. This helps reach new markets and reflects the realities of our lives."*

Arvind Mohan, Founder & Managing Partner, Religious Brands said, *"As we unmask the layers of masculinity in modern media, Manifest Report sheds light on the evolving narratives of manhood. Through this study, conducted in association with ASCI Academy and Unstereotype Alliance, we aim to champion a critical yet compassionate dialogue around masculinity. Our goal is to embrace empathy, dismantle binary stereotypes, and redefine masculinity in ways that are inclusive, aspirational, and reflective of today's diverse realities. By addressing these narratives, we hope this report will provide actionable insights to help the media and advertising ecosystem foster representation that is equitable, relatable, and progressive."*

The report advocates for a nuanced approach that acknowledges the pressures and social conditioning men face, offers positive alternatives, and expands the definition of what it means to be a man, rather than simply dismantling traditional notions without offering a clear and aspirational path forward.

The report release was followed by a presentation of the report findings by Religious Brands. This was then followed by an inspiring talk by Devdutt Pattanaik, on the evolution of masculinity in India. This was followed by a power-packed panel discussion that discussed the key anxieties faced by young men today that are often unaddressed by mainstream media. The conversation also touched upon the binary approach to masculinity and means to foster a more nuanced understanding. The event also incorporated case studies from Diageo, HUL, and Bajaj Auto. Key speakers and panellists included Paromita Vohra, Anila Vinayak, Guy Parker, and Binaifer Dulani.

The full report is available here: [Manifest: Masculinities Beyond the Mask](#)

About the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI): The ASCI, established in 1985, is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising, ensuring the protection of consumer

interests. ASCI seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation, which requires advertisements to be legal, decent, honest, and truthful and not hazardous or harmful while observing fairness in competition. ASCI looks into complaints across all media, such as print, TV, radio, hoardings, SMS, emailers, the internet/website, product packaging, brochures, promotional material, point of sale material, etc. ASCI has collaboratively worked with various government bodies, including the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the Ministry of AYUSH, and the Ministry of Information and PRESS RELEASE Broadcasting (MIB). In August 2023, the ASCI Academy, a flagship program of ASCI, was launched to build the capacity of all stakeholders to create responsible and progressive advertising. ASCI Academy aims to raise standards of advertising content through training, education, outreach, and research on the preventive aspects of advertising self-regulation.

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