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How Mainstream Media Organisations Can Advertise for, and Attract, Black, Asian and Global Majority Journalists.

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Executive Summary

Job advertisements are an important step in building a more racially diverse workforce at every level of an organisation, and play a critical role in any diversity, inclusion and equity policies. They are especially important in mainstream UK journalism organisations which historically have excluded Black, Asian and Global Majority people, still suffer from disproportionately low levels of racial diversity, and often rely on personal and social networks both for entry level positions and career progression to senior positions.

The report concludes

- There is a significant number of Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists who are not working for mainstream media organisations to the detriment of UK mainstream journalism.
- Companies need to take a more tailored approach to their approach to the platforms used to place job advertisements, recognising the importance of intersectionality in reaching different demographics.
- The “diversity statements” used in job advertisements to attract Black Asian and Global Majority applicants are failing to promote diversity, in some cases may even be counterproductive, and must be rethought as a matter of urgency
- There are a number of informal working practices which actively work against job advertisements being a useful tool to increase racial diversity in mainstream UK journalism – key among these is the informal use of freelancers. These working practices must be addressed to create a “level playing field” for formal job advertisements and recruitment to be effective.
- Job advertisements alone are not sufficient to achieve diversity and inclusion goals. It must be acknowledged that the reputation of most mainstream media organisations precedes them. Companies must therefore also look at their output and diversity policies as a whole and explore different ways to increase trust and confidence in Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists to actively want to work for them.

And finally, any policies to improve the appeal of job advertisements to reach a broader demographic should be an ongoing process. The issues raised in this report should be monitored at regular intervals and policies to address them will need to be revisited and adapted as the media environment changes.

Introduction

In 2022 the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity (LHC) was approached by NewsUK on behalf of the Network of Black and Asian Journalists (NBAJ), a loose umbrella group comprising of mainstream media companies and representatives of media companies including: NewsUK, ITN, the Guardian, and Reach plc, to look at:

1. The most effective ways to both communicate media companies' goal to attract a wider range of applications from journalists from different ethnic and racial backgrounds for advertised positions.
2. How media companies can become target destinations for aspiring and experienced Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists to work.

The term 'Black, Asian and Global Majority' has been used throughout this report to describe people who do not describe themselves as white and, as a group, have been the recipients of prejudice and discrimination due to their race and/or ethnicity.

The report advises on:

1. Different effective methods to attract journalistic talent at different career levels including entry level, mid-career and senior roles
2. Investigating obstacles to reaching and appealing to Black Asian and Global Majority journalists
3. How to overcome these obstacles.

Background

The number of journalism graduates from Black, Asian and Global Majority backgrounds in the UK exceeds their proportion in the general population. The National Council for the Training of Journalists published a study (National Council for the Training of Journalists , 2017) which found that 82% of undergraduate journalism students, who gave their ethnicity, were white, with 8% Black, 4% Asian and 6% 'other'.

Despite this higher proportion of Black, Asian and Global Majority students studying journalism, representatives of mainstream media organisations within NBAJ say they face difficulties in attracting Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists to apply for advertised positions, or to see their organisations as "target" destinations to work for.

Established in 2021, NBAJ have created specific LinkedIn groups for Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists and held specific events targeting those journalists, and organisations represented at NBAJ have adjusted the wordings of adverts to demonstrate their openness to a broader range of applicants. However, despite these efforts none of the media organisations represented in NBAJ feel they are attracting the quality and quantity of Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists they would like and/or expect.

Aim of the Report

The LHC was asked to advise on how mainstream news companies in general, and NBAJ members specifically, can attract more Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists to apply to listed job postings.

The report explores best practice, and the most effective methods, to attract Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists at varying career points for a range of different types of UK media organisations.

The LHC was also tasked to identify reasons and obstacles as to why Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists may not see certain media organisations as “target” destinations, and how to overcome these.

Methodology

To investigate the best methods to attract Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists to new job posts via advertising, this study demanded a qualitative approach focused on appraising the opinions of those involved in recruiting and hiring as well as those working as journalists in those spaces.

Two qualitative methods have been employed: semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of the transcripts of those interviews. Two methods were chosen because a mixed methodology allows for flexibility in overcoming the limitations of a single design method (Castro, et al., 2010).

16 interviews were conducted. Interviewees included recruitment specialists, entry-level journalists, senior journalists as well as professionals executing diversity and inclusion mandates within their organisations. Yu & Cooper (1983) posit that personal interviews are advantageous because they involve personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees, as well as eliminate non-response rates.

Given that the research called for a study of an aspect of the human condition, it was necessary to choose a method that allowed that expression.

A list of questions was designed for the interview process. They were based on research questions and developed in tandem with the literature review. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom and lasted between 45 minutes to 60 minutes. Some interviews were conducted with multiple people who worked within the same position. This list of questions was delivered in a semi-structured interview in order to collect a range of experiences. These interviews serve as narratives in and of themselves (Herrera, 2023), fleshing out the scope of experiences. They also offer patterns which inform the thematic analysis.

All participants were expressly asked for permission to participate in the interview and be recorded. They were reassured that their answers would be treated as confidential and anonymous upon request and used only for the purposes of this particular research.

All participants were given the option of anonymity - to withdraw their consent for publication of their identity and attribution of their words or any other item which may work as an identifier to their person.

Participants were not harmed or abused physically or psychologically, during the conducting of the research.

Thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews was utilised to establish common themes and beliefs which answered the research question. To be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible. The process of conducting a thematic analysis is illustrated through the presentation of an auditable decision trail, guiding interpreting and representing textual data (Nowell, et al., 2017).



Literature Review

Purpose

The purpose of this literature review is to examine how literature pertaining to the research topic can give insight to the investigation. The research topic examines the most effective way to:

1. Communicate media organisations' goal and to attract a wider range of applications from journalists from different ethnic and racial backgrounds for advertised positions.
2. Advise media organisations on how to become target destinations for aspiring and experienced Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists to work and pitch to.

Key Literature

While research on advertising has been conducted for approximately 100 years, beginning with Starch's (1923) theory on effective advertising, research on ethnic and racial diversity in workspaces started after the 1960's drive for workplace diversity through equal employment laws and affirmative action. Intersectional research focusing on ethnic and racial diversity and representation in advertising is not a new field. However, research into how members of these groups perceive advertising directed towards them, is still, by academic standards, in its embryonic stages.

For this report, literature was reviewed categorically in order to understand the particularity of each topic within the research question. Academic literature, industry reports and journalistic articles from the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media diversity, Harvard Business Review, Forbes Magazine, the Poynter Institute, the Reuters Institute, the Nieman Lab, AP News, the Times, the BBC, the Ethical Journalism Network and the Columbia Journalism Review were utilised alongside other sources to address these two elements of the research topic.

Importance of Adverts

According to the worldwide employment website Indeed.com, advertising is important because it increases sales, informs customers, helps introduce products, informs you about your competition, retains customers, increases employee morale, differentiates your brand, increases customer trust, reaches target customers and explains company values (Indeed, 2022).

The goal of advertising is to deliver persuasive communication convincing another party to change opinions or attitudes (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999). The literature on the importance of advertising suggests that this relationship between the company and the market becomes one of symbiosis as one influences the other. With that influence, there also comes responsibility, particularly towards racial and ethnic minorities as “advertising affects many aspects of our lives and can promote different behaviors that if misdirected can cause harmful outcomes in the life of the affected being” (Melgar & Elsner, 2016).

Lin et. al (2021) states that “Active marketing is about receiving messages from potential buyers to create ways to influence their purchasing decisions.” Therefore, in terms of best practice and most effective methods, media organisations need to move towards an advertising strategy where they recognise that they are the product and if they want ethnic and racial minority candidates to engage with their message, they need to employ strategies to convince the applicant to buy into them and their brand.

Branding and advertising go hand in hand and a “business that is missing key elements of branding will have an even harder time getting people to trust them” (Forbes, 2021).

In today’s world, businesses are increasingly embracing what is known as brand activism, taking a stand on local and global issues. This trend is driven by consumer behaviour, as more and more people expect companies to make a positive contribution to society. A 2018 survey covering 35 countries showed that 64% of consumers would reward firms which they see as engaged in some kind of activism (BBC, 2020).

Diversity in advertising has shifted with an increase in representation between 2020-2021, a surge associated with pledges following the Black Lives Matter protests. Creative Logistics firm Extreme Reach found that in North America, white actors accounted for 73% of the people seen in video ad creative in 2022, compared with 66% in 2021, 67% in 2020 and 74% in 2019 (Extreme Reach , 2022). Also, in 2022, 94% of ads contained at least one white actor, the highest rate of occurrence in the four years analysed (Ibid). Overall, Black, Asian and Hispanic representation in video ad creative declined in 2022, with Hispanic representation reaching its lowest mark in four years (Ibid). In the United Kingdom, research published by the Lloyds Banking Group found that “since 2015, the inclusion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic characters in UK advertising has doubled from 12% to 25% (Lloyds Banking Group , 2018). However, 3 in 5 adverts (60%) still feature all or a majority of white people (Ibid).

Only 7% of adverts feature Black, Asian and Global Majority groups as the dominant or main character. In addition, their findings revealed that 29% of Black people feel negatively stereotyped in advertising (Ibid).

To achieve both legitimacy and efficiency, organisations must respond to expectations to perform as proper social actors (Meyer & Bromley, 2013).

In a post Black Lives Matter world, the current climate has exacerbated the need for media organisations in the UK to step up their advertising practices and branding, increase transparency and induce structural change to gain more social capital and more trust.

A report by the Ethical Journalism Network (Ethical Journalism Network, 2023) shared findings which reflect this point saying, “Numbers and representation of Black people have increased but as one person put it, ‘We now have three people instead of just one in a newsroom of over 100 people’. One of the key issues with diversity strategies is their cyclical nature, whereby a shocking or large-scale event will force those in positions of power to commit to change. However, that commitment is often short lived, a point confirmed by the Black journalists interviewed.”

Andreassen (2021) describes this as “decoupling” where “organisational responses to normative expectations are forms of impression management rather than actual transformations of organisational practices.”

Patricia Digh is quoted in (Human Resource Management, 2001) positing that more organizations are making a point of highlighting diversity in their ads these days for two reasons. One, they are competing for talent in a tight market, and two, they recognize that demographic shifts are going to dramatically change their marketplace in the next two decades.

“It is important to note that recruiting for a diverse workplace is linked to another trend: Corporations are linking the increasing buying power of ethnic markets [and people with disabilities] to the new social demands on business to realize that people of color as an example are more likely to buy products from companies who not only sell to them but also hire them. Product and hiring selling practices are linked more intimately than ever before” (Human Resource Management, 2001).

So, with brands like NewsUK committing to “Attracting, developing and retaining young talent from a much broader pool, driving gender and ethnic diversity in our wider leadership and ensuring diversity and inclusivity in their workforce as well as the journalism and content they produce” (News UK , 2023), one could reason that they are moving in the right direction. However, the most important thing brands need to measure in order to know whether the advertising is effective or not is the positive response of the targeted customer (Sama, 2019). One of the ways this can be measured is through responses to diversity statements in advertising.

The importance of advertising should not simply be viewed in terms of measuring how many applicants they are able to attract but also in terms of “lift”.

Harvard Business Review defines the concept of “lift” as a “claim that ads will create or cause behavioral change” (Harvard Business Review, 2021). Rather than focusing on how many people see the ad and apply for the job which is known as the conversion rate, lift is the measurement of how a change to advertising can influence new purchasing behaviour.

To measure lift, companies will have to roll out messaging or a particular campaign and see if there is an actual uptick in applications based on that advertising. Therefore, this concept is useful when examining diversity statements and whether there is any impact on the behaviour of applicants.

Diversity Statements in advertising

While different platforms are known for prioritising different content, as diversity and inclusivity become watchwords within modern spaces, according to Forbes, audiences now expect to see those values reflected in ad campaigns. Perkins et. al. (2000) acknowledges that “organizational attractiveness, perceived compatibility to the organization, and evaluations of organizational image” all define reactions to job advertisements within minority communities. The language companies use for their advertisements, whether they are an “equal opportunity provider” or “encourage applications from people of diverse backgrounds”, their reputation as well as the information they provide about newsroom culture and opportunities, matter.

However, literature shows that diversity schemes, while well intentioned, if not part of a wider institutional change which departs from tokenistic hiring of ethnic and racial minorities, can have the opposite of the intended effect.

In an article titled “The Unintended Consequences of Diversity Statements”, the Harvard Business Review found that “to the extent that pro-diversity statements encourage job applicants to let their guard down and disclose more racial information, these statements may be doing more harm than good. If appeals to diversity encourage applicants to reveal racial cues to an organization that has not adequately addressed discriminatory hiring practices, then pro-diversity statements may effectively expose minorities to greater discrimination” (Harvard Business Review, 2016). This includes micro-aggressive behaviour by non-Black colleagues, according to the Ethical Journalism Network (2023) report.

It can also be seen by Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists as a perfunctory box ticking exercise. For example, the Ethical Journalism Network (2023) report states, “However, for many the term [diversity hire] has become negatively loaded because it has been usurped by many to invalidate the talents and skills of Black journalists. This negates the effectiveness of hiring more people from minoritised groups unless steps are also taken to provide and guarantee an inclusive work culture and ecosystem.”

These highly institutionalised practices often reinforce inequality (Amis, et al., 2020).

Andreassen (2021) writes that these diversity clauses appear “as a response to expectations from the organisations’ environment, namely anti-discrimination regulations and activation policies that aim to persuade employers to counteract inequality and include minorities and marginalised groups.” However, it is this very act that aspires to meet institutional expectations “that fails to avoid reproducing the inequality that it aspires to reduce” (Ibid).

In a study by two Senior Content Marketing Managers at LinkedIn titled, “Here’s What Candidates Really Think About the Diversity Statements in Your Job Posts” (Lewis & Tong, 2021), candidates were asked to review the company statement on diversity in job advertisements.

The report stated that, “Although many people found the generic statement, well, generic — using words like ‘boilerplate’ and ‘legalese’ to describe it — many also appreciated its thoroughness...One participant neatly captured this ambivalence: ‘The [generic] statement seemed mostly like the company was just trying to check the box...but the additional non-discriminatory factors did give me reason to believe the company cared about diversity’.” (Lewis & Tong, 2021).

This study is further expounded on in the section on poor diversity statements.

Within the (Ethical Journalism Network, 2023) report, there was recognition by interviewees that “diversity recruitment quotas were at times integral to ensuring a more diverse workforce.” However, “It should also be noted that, although media organisations were seen to be championing different diversity schemes, it was a commonly held belief that many of these are not really working as they do little to address the structural issues in the industry or indeed society at large.”

Moreover, as Andreassen (2021) states, “Although job advertisements obviously cannot be taken to represent all recruitment practices of an organisation, they signal to potential applicants what kinds of employees are wanted.” The obligation to appear as a “proper social actor” or meet legal requirements induced by anti-discrimination legislation simultaneously suggests that diversity hires are not organic and natural, they must be worked at. The performative act of job advertisement conveys a message to readers about the ideal employee (Harper, 2012). Therefore, diversity statements can be seen as a form of “othering”.

Platforms

From the first advertisements in the weekly gazettes of the 16th and 17th centuries to the advent of social media influencers who tell people what to consume and what not to consume, relaying information to the public is the key aspect of an advertisement. Each different method of advertising has its own pros and cons depending on the specific job being advertised. Liu (2020) states that existing studies on advertising messaging are not conclusive when it comes to specificity in messaging. One study revealed that the effect the message has is dependent upon the person viewing it. Best practices depend largely on the particularities of the intended audience and the most effective methods can also vary between markets.

Traditional advertising takes the form of handouts, billboards, direct mail campaigns, print ads in newspapers and magazines and broadcasting ads on the radio or television. With the advent of the internet and rise in online usage, digital advertising has taken precedence with display advertising in the form of digital banner ads across various devices, paid search advertising which search engines prioritise, social media advertising on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat and as mentioned above, the rise of influencers who promote brands to their social media followers.

According to a study by Lin et. al (2021), advertising through Facebook has better sales than newspapers and the use of computer-based technologies and online mediums has a brighter future for advertising.

However, an article by Harvard Business Review (2021) said that “the effectiveness of digital ads is wildly oversold. A large-scale study of ads on eBay found that brand search ad effectiveness was overestimated by up to 4,100%. A similar analysis of Facebook ads threw up a number of 4,000%” (Harvard Business Review, 2021). Most companies agree that a hybrid approach to advertising, utilising both traditional and digital approaches, is the best strategy.

With regards to the pros and cons of different advertising methods intended to attract racial and ethnic minority journalists in the UK, respondents within this study outlined that while companies are investing in digital advertising to promote available positions, the nuances of the industry have mapped out a different path of job acquisition for applicants, with variations depending on the career level one is applying for.

NewsUK has advertised on their website that they “have established partnerships with a range of diversity recruitment specialists” (News UK , 2023) and lean on these networks to recruit diverse talent. The institutional norms of recruitment in the media industry in the UK show that once a job posting is produced, it is sent out to talent and recruitment agencies, websites and social media platforms.

Pipeline

Institutional myths must also be dispersed to address the real issues which affect the upward progression of ethnic and racial minority journalists.

A 2015 article in the Columbia Journalism Review reflected an issue that is still pervasive in the UK media landscape – the pipeline problem. Alex T. Williams writes, “Last month I wrote about how editors have explained a lack of minority journalists in newsrooms as a “pipeline problem” (i.e., editors claim they aren’t hiring minorities because there aren’t enough minority applicants), but how data collected from colleges and newsrooms across the country rejects this idea. The problem isn’t a lack of qualified candidates; it’s unequal hiring” (Williams, 2015).

In a 2021 AP News report, Doris Truong, director of training and diversity at the Poynter Institute, said that the news industry is seeing a generational shift among young staff members less willing to wait for attitudes to change (AP News, 2021). In the same report, Robert Hernandez, a professor at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism said that “There is no pipeline problem...We are producing diverse students. The reality is they’re not being hired, they’re not being retained, they’re not being promoted” (Ibid).

This myth of the pipeline problem is also perpetuated across UK media.

It is a fact that socio-economic and cultural factors do influence the decisions of ethnic and racial minority journalists in terms of career choices. These factors are part of a bigger systemic fissure in the societal landscape available to ethnic minorities in the UK, where factors like equitable access to healthcare and education inevitably and intrinsically overlap and intersect with racial diversity.

It would be wrong to simply conflate issues limiting racial diversity as being the same issues that limit socio-economic diversity. While addressing some of the factors that hinder one type of diversity will invariably help address other diversity issues – such as more equitable and more transparent interview processes for example – each type of diversity problem should be looked at separately.

For example when looking at the possible “pipeline problem” the rates of Black, Asian and Global Majority people attending university are higher at each socio-economic bracket compared to their white counterparts, and if one looks at retention rates, where data does exist, this appears to be lower for Black, Asian and Global majority employees compared to their white counterparts irrespective of their socioeconomic background.

More than 59 universities offer upwards of 200 courses in journalism and media. According to graduation statistics, 19,250 students graduated from programmes in media, journalism and communications in 2022 (StandOutCV, 2023). Respondents within this study who were part of the hiring process commented that they do get numerous applications from Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists and that there is no pipeline problem between the university programmes and the real world newsrooms. Rather, the pipeline problem is found in the actual media organisation and their culture of promotion and retention of journalists from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds.

A 2021 journalism.co.uk article which featured the newly appointed editor of The Conversation, Jo Adetunji, examined the issue. “The problem in the pipeline, in Adetunji’s view, is that newsrooms historically hire in their own image” (Journalism.co.uk, 2021).

Research shows that there is a high rate of Black, Asian and Global Majority Journalism graduates with the NCTJ publishing in 2017 that “82% of undergraduate journalism students who gave their ethnicity were white, with 8% black, 4% Asian and 6% other” (National Council for the Training of Journalists , 2017).

The article by Jacob Granger stated that “It is no secret that the UK news industry is not diverse enough. Recent research has confirmed this: around 90 per cent of the industry is white and holds a university degree, while three quarters of British journalists have parents in high-profile jobs like academics or directors. Long story short, the journalism industry is posher than the general workforce” (Journalism.co.uk, 2021).

Democracy Fund also deconstructed this myth saying that “The leadership of majority-white newsrooms still latches onto the myth that there’s a pipeline problem — blaming the lack of diversity on a lack of job candidates. But past research has shown that graduates of color are hired by newsrooms at lower rates than their white counterparts, while a recent survey shows a disturbing trend of mostly mid-career, Black women exiting the industry. Namely, the candidates are there, but newsroom leadership is failing to hire and retain them” (Democracy Fund, 2021).

In a 2022 piece for the Nieman Lab, writer Clio Chang stated that, “Much of the pipeline problem has to do with retention issues — how journalists from different backgrounds are treated when they enter institutions that were not made for them. But it’s also about how, and whether, journalists can even enter the industry in the first place” (Nieman Lab, 2022).

The 2023 Ethical Journalism Network report on Structural Racism in the UK News found that “mainstream UK newsrooms are often unwelcoming for Black journalists, and the situation is having an impact on practices and outputs. Black journalists are dealing with a number of challenges and barriers to entry, racial microaggressions once in the newsroom and, ultimately, the exclusion of their own voices and other Black people within and outside Britain. Racist attitudes and behaviours have become engrained, whether consciously or otherwise, structurally within news organisations, and there is seemingly a lack of will to fully address systemic issues at their core” (Ethical Journalism Network, 2023).

The Nieman Lab article pointed out that there are attempts being made to address the problem, where “Some people within newsrooms, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions are attempting to build up and reimagine these pipelines, even as the industry continues to face financial challenges, whether through sustained mentorship programs, investing in wider outreach for paid internships and training, or expanding flexibility around what journalism work looks like. Labor unions are also working to lift workplace conditions overall by raising salaries and improving benefits, which are some of the most straightforward ways to allow people from different kinds of backgrounds to support themselves. There are a number of solutions, well-trod and inventive alike, should institutions care to invest in them” (Nieman Lab, 2022).

In the United States, there have been projects to encourage and facilitate the progression of Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists. One project in North Carolina implemented by Emma Carew, a fellow at the Reynolds Journalism Institute, prioritises a work experience where, over the course of approximately six months, early- to mid-career journalists work with their direct manager and an executive level sponsor from within their organization as well as their Upward group.

Carew was quoted as saying, “The executive sponsor is out there with a machete making the path easier. The day-to-day manager is navigating the course. The fellow is trying to get from point a to point b. The rest of the team is there to pick them up and shove them along the way to get to their goal” (The Poynter Institute, 2022).

Advertising different career levels - Not all roles are the same

Leaders in the newsroom from ethnic and racial minorities are few in the UK media landscape. This may be based on the practiced system of recruitment. Respondents in this study explained that most roles which are considered entry level are advertised on the job boards, through talent and recruitment agencies, the company’s website and across social media platforms. However, for more mid-career and senior roles, word of mouth is the dominant method of “advertisement”. Some respondents commented that they had not applied for a job in years but rather had ascertained their positions through personal contacts and conversations.

In 2001, Greg Dyke, the director-general of the BBC, condemned the corporation as ‘hideously white’ (The Guardian , 2001) and said its race relations are as bad as those in some police forces. In 2018, in a report on its workforce, the BBC published that “Although ‘**B.A.M.E**’ leadership figures are also at their highest percentages ever (10.4%), we are not close to the 2020 target of 15% and in certain areas ‘**B.A.M.E**’ employees in leadership are below 4% (e.g. Marketing and Audiences). There are no ‘**B.A.M.E**’ employees on the Executive Committee. Of the top 96 leaders at the BBC, six (6.3%) are non-white men, there are no non-white women and there are no black men or women” (BBC, 2018).

A 2021 article by Jacob Granger in journalism.co.uk recognised that “It is not great progress for a sector with no shortage of diversity schemes from the likes of PA Media/The Evening Standard, ITV News, BBC News and Reuters. Plus, many news organisations this year have backed the long-established Journalism Diversity Fund (JDF), run by the National Council for the Training for Journalism (NCTJ)” (Journalism.co.uk, 2021).

As the (Ethical Journalism Network, 2023) report recognises, “conventional approaches which are implemented under the umbrella “diversity and inclusion” ...mainly focus on achieving entry-level targets.” Respondents within this study have spoken favourably about diversity schemes. At the same time, “It should also be noted that, although media organisations were seen to be championing different diversity schemes, it was a commonly held belief that many of these are not really working as they do little to address the structural issues in the industry or indeed society at large...There was also a common perception that numbers of Black people had increased mainly in roles that were considered to be “behind the scenes” i.e., in the case of broadcast media, researchers or associate producers rather than presenters” (Ibid).

Therefore, the problem is two-fold. While there is a plethora of advertisements going out to various job sites used across the industry as well as on social media for entry-level journalists, these very schemes and opportunities are failing to address the core, systemic issues which racial and ethnic minorities face. Also, recruitment for senior positions is done mainly by association, networking and word of mouth.

Given that senior positions are seen to be filled “mainly of white Oxbridge graduates, mainly men, with little in common with many Black journalists (Ethical Journalism Network, 2023), the ability for ethnic and racial minority journalists to achieve those positions is limited.

General lack of diversity in newsrooms

A 2016 report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford stated that “UK journalism has a significant diversity problem in terms of ethnicity, with black Britons, for example, under-represented by a factor of more than ten. Those of Asian and Black ethnicity are under-represented in the population of UK journalists. The most under-represented group are Black Britons, who make up approximately 3% of the British population but just 0.2% of our sample. Asian Britons represent approximately 7% of the UK population but just 2.5% of our sample” (Reuters Institute , 2023). In this same sample, white journalists made up 94%.

A 2021 report by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2021) also found that 8% of journalists in the UK came from non-white groups and non-white staff were less represented in senior roles, with just 10% of editors being of non-white ethnicity . While some reports show that racial and ethnic diversity numbers are up across the industry as a whole in the United Kingdom, researchers have also outlined disproportion in representation in senior positions.

According to a report produced by AKAS Audience Strategy in November 2022, “no people of colour occupy the most senior editorial decision-making positions across politics and health news beats” (AKAS, 2022). This visible lack of representation at senior roles suggests an obstacle to institutional progression for ethnic and racial minorities.

A study on “Race and leadership in the news media” by the Reuters Institute found that “In Brazil, Germany, and the UK, as in 2021, none of the outlets in [the] sample have a non-white top editor. In the US, 33% of top editors are non-white, up from 18% in 2021, and in South Africa, 73% are non-white, up from 60% in 2021. In every single country covered, the percentage of non-white people in the general population is much higher than it is among top editors” (Reuters Institute , 2023).

The 2021 NCTJ report on Diversity in Journalism found that journalists are more likely to come from households where a parent works/worked in a higher-level occupation, one of the key determinants of social class (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2021). Within the industry, 75 per cent of journalists had a parent in one of the three highest occupational groups, compared to 45 per cent of all UK workers. Less than one in ten (eight per cent) have a parent in the lowest two occupations compared to 20 per cent of all workers.

According to the 2020 report by the Social Metrics Commission (Social Metrics Commission, 2020), nearly half of Black African Caribbean households live in poverty. This is in comparison to just under one in five white families, while B.A.M.E families as a whole were between two and three times as likely to be in persistent poverty than white households.

The (Ethical Journalism Network, 2023) report states that “The news media industry was seen by the Black journalists who were interviewed to comprise mainly of white Oxbridge graduates, mainly men, with little in common with many Black journalists. Working class Black journalists interviewed for this study were all concerned that without mechanisms to address class structures in the media industry there would be little improvement in conditions for marginalised Black groups.” This finding is a clear statement of what is needed in terms of best practices and effective methods of attracting ethnic and racial minorities – “This raises a question around whether diversity opportunities should include an intersectional consideration of people from minority backgrounds in order to genuinely address equality of opportunity in entering the industry” (Ibid).

Trust

Research by the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity during this study has revealed that Black journalists turn to Black mentors or unofficial support groups to navigate and share experiences. Therefore, if a particular newsroom or media house is doing well or not doing well with addressing these issues and building a relationship of trust and promoting Black and Majority journalists to senior leadership positions and offering job security via permanent contracts, journalists in the community will know about it through their conversations with their colleagues in these ethnic and racial minority spaces. This can influence whether they see certain media organisations as “target destinations”.

The (Ethical Journalism Network, 2023) report states that, “Stakeholders also commented on the lack of job stability with an overwhelming sense that Black journalists were more likely to be given fixed term rather than permanent contracts. Although there appears no available quantitative data to back up this theory, with little feedback on how and why decisions are taken, trust becomes broken and it is possible for negative assumptions to be made.”

Trust is measured by a variety of factors including how brands show up in the world when issues affecting ethnic and racial minority journalists come to the forefront, such as the Black Lives Matter protests, coverage of Meghan Markle and the killing of Chris Kaba.

Women in Journalism (2020) carried out a study in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd at the climax of the Black Lives Matter protests. They found that during the course of one week in July that year, “not a single story by a Black reporter appeared on the front page of a UK newspaper. And in that time only six front page stories were written by ‘**B.A.M.E**’ reporters.”

Nuances of this study are further discussed in the later section “Do senior newsroom executives believe the diverse talent is out there?”

Douglas (2021) observed, “When Meghan Markle highlighted the racist treatment she’s been subjected to by the British press during the recent interview she gave Oprah Winfrey, one of the most interesting factors that arose in the media storm that followed was the chasm between the response by the Society of Editors, an industry body which acts to protect the interests of British media organisations, and journalists of colour who work for those organisations.”

Douglas explained that the Society’s executive director at the time, Ian Murray, issued a statement insisting that the media in the UK was not bigoted and went on to criticise Markle. Over 200 journalists of colour responded by signing an open letter “describing the Society’s statement as ‘laughable’ and an illustration of an ‘industry in denial’” (Douglas, 2021).

Today, more people expect companies to work ethically and make a positive contribution to society. Therefore, as businesses have been increasingly embracing what is known as brand activism and taking a stand on social, environmental, or political issues to build trust (BBC, 2020), applicants who are part of the regular public will also expect the same.

However, the Ethical Journalism Network (2023) report found that “that mainstream UK newsrooms are often unwelcoming for Black journalists, and the situation is having an impact on practices and outputs. Black journalists are dealing with a number of challenges and barriers to entry, racial microaggressions once in the newsroom and, ultimately, the exclusion of their own voices and other Black people within and outside Britain.”

Retention

Douglas (2021) states that “The ability of journalists of colour to deal with everyday micro and macro racialised aggression that often pertains to the denial of their professional status, of not being ‘recognised’ (Taylor, 1994), is exacerbated or alleviated by the doxa of the institutions they work for. Organisational willingness to deal with racism as a fact that permeates institutional structures, impacts on the well-being and retention of black and brown staff...institutional commitments to diversity often don’t correspond with the experiences of those included, impacting negatively on the retention of black journalists.”

Addressing this very issue, the Ethical Journalism Network (2023) called for “greater accountability and transparency at an institutional level in the processes of recruitment and retention, as well as editorial practices” where “targets should be seen as a quick-fix and not used in isolation from more substantive and longer term work to remove the barriers that prevent Black journalists from entering into senior positions. There is evidence that the number of Black journalists is increasing at entry level, but a deeper look at recruitment and promotion processes is vital to understanding why representation remains limited at top levels.”

In addition to recruitment practices and newsroom experiences, the study commissioned by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (American Society of Newspaper Editors, 2001) on retention of newspaper journalists of colour, revealed two factors as the main motivators to leave the job - lack of professional challenge and lack of opportunities for advancement. The study posits, “It appears, from this research review, that no amount of work to improve other areas of the job-e.g., the quality of the working environment, supervisory relationships, pay, etc.-will result in greater retention of journalists of color unless these two issues are adequately addressed” (Ibid). While this study was conducted in the United States as a comparative body of work between 1989 to 2000, these

issues are still core problems today. Singh & Sharma (2021) also found that 21 years later, “Factors of satisfaction that are found most important for them is opportunity of career advancement which suggest that they are not getting in comparison to their counterparts. There are less number of management executive in media houses belonging to minority community in USA.” These same issues are echoed across the UK media landscape. (Singh & Sharma, 2021).

In a 2021 article for Editor and Publisher, award winning journalist Lottie Joiner advised that “Though there has been considerable progress in appointing talented journalists of color to top leadership positions in the last few years, the true test of a newsroom’s commitment to diversity is retention” (Editor & Publisher , 2021).

Joiner goes on to advise that organisations must answer these questions for their potential recruits: “What’s the culture of the organization? What are the plans for retention? Are diverse journalists leading newsroom discussions? How will their unique backgrounds, experiences and perspectives contribute to coverage? Are their opinions valued?” (Editor & Publisher , 2021).

In a 2022 article by the National Press Club Journalism Institute, they advised that defining opportunities for training, growth and progression in advertisements will assist with retention in newsrooms. Advertisements with language similar to, “Leadership is where we need to grow the most” and “We’ve expanded some of our leadership roles” (National Press Club Journalism Institute, 2022) are also positive additions. Partnering with organisations linked to ethnic and racial minorities to create opportunities for internship, and fellowship aid in building career connections as well. In addition, being upfront about salary expectations and progressive financial opportunities builds trust and empower job seekers to make informed decisions.



Voices and Experiences from UK News Organisations

Introduction

Key stakeholders in the media industry both working within the NBAJ member organisations and outside of them were interviewed for this report.

Questions were based on the main research aims and the results of the literature review, as well as the first-hand experience and knowledge of the research team at the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity (LHC). The authors developed these questions to explore specific expertise and experience of the interviewees.

Themes were identified which emphasised specific obstacles as well as opportunities to improve job advertisements to attract a wider pool of appropriate candidates from Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists.

Why job advertisements are viewed as important within news organisations

Interviewees viewed job advertisements as important for a number of reasons which can roughly be divided into three categories, broadly chiming with much of the current literature on the issue:

1. Job advertisements, depending on how they are distributed, can let a broader range of potential candidates know that a job is available, increasing the possibility of employing a person from an under-represented group.
2. The process of crafting an advertisement can shift perceptions both internally and externally of who may be appropriate to hire for the position. The job advertisement explicitly pre-defines what qualities are actually needed to perform the job, and who may or may not consider themselves qualified for a job. The act of actively articulating what skills and experiences are needed for a position removes sub-conscious, and often unintended biases of who employers consider to be appropriate.
3. Job advertisements also send out important messages about the company itself which in turn may encourage people to think about the company as a “destination employer” and increase the number of people from different demographics, and with different protected characteristics.

These three points were raised time and again in our interviews with NBAJ members and was succinctly summarised by one interviewee directly involved in DEI work; “Essentially that advert has to invite people into the... it has to encourage different people to apply for it. It also obviously has to inform of what the actual job is. I mean, I think it essentially is an advert for the company.”

Current job advertisements are failing to attract a diverse range of candidates

The overwhelming majority of interviewees for this study saw job advertisements as being a critical tool in increasing diversity, with comments ranging from; “I think it is an important part of it [increasing diversity]”, to “I think the fact that we advertise is, is the first step in in all of this [increasing diversity]”.

However, despite the knowledge and general acceptance of the importance of job advertisements to attract a broader and more diverse range of potential candidates, many of the news organisations taking part in this study complain that they still struggle to attract the quality of candidates they need from ethnically diverse backgrounds at all levels.

One senior editor told the LHC they thought job advertisements “obviously are important. I would say that our learnings are the traditional job advertising and where you place those adverts are not ideal, or even particularly efficient to reaching diverse communities”.

Non-public facing statistics supplied by certain member organisations of NBAJ to this study showed a lower response rate to job listings from Black, Asian and Global Majority applicants.

The obvious question that has to be answered is why after several decades of recognising the importance of job adverts to increase diversity have they seemingly failed to deliver?

Do senior newsroom executives believe the diverse talent is out there?

The question that must first be answered when trying to attract diverse talent through job advertisements is whether the diverse talent is out there to attract and whether there are a greater number of potential candidates for entry, mid or senior level roles.

Looking at currently available data, the lack of racial diversity across UK newsrooms is striking.

As outlined in the literature review, research conducted in 2021 for the NCTJ (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2021) suggests the proportion of non-white journalists in the UK stands at just 8%. This figure has not changed significantly, in either direction, in recent years.

In its report for the NCTJ the authors note however that the figure of 8% should be treated with some caution “because they are aggregated from four quarterly surveys of 60,000 households and 150,000 over-16s each. The survey has a margin of error of 6,000 and journalists make up about 0.3% of the UK workforce. Journalists are defined as those in the category: “journalists, newspaper and periodical editors” (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2021).

However other research suggests that the 8% figure may be an overestimate. Douglas (2021) compiled research which demonstrated that the figure is closer to 6%. The 6% figure also showed wide variance between different ethnic groups; “just 0.2% of journalists are black, compared with 3% of the UK population, Asian Britons make up 7% of the UK population, but just 2.5% of the journalist workforce” (Ibid).

Douglas (2021) also points out that these figures are all the more “alarming given that most of the UK’s national news media organisations are based in London, where, according to the 2011 census, only 45% of the population are of white English, Scottish or Welsh heritage.”

The seniority of the positions held by non-White journalists also points to an even worse situation and an industry in which the disproportionately lower number of non-white journalists are overwhelmingly found in less-high profile positions.

In 2020 the Press Gazette published research by Women in Journalism showing that in one week in July 2020 - at the height of the Black Lives Matter protests across the world - UK’s 11 biggest newspapers failed to feature a single byline by a Black journalist on their front pages. Of the 174 bylines examined, only 4 were credited to journalists of colour, none of whom were Black (Women in Journalism , 2020).

As concerning as these numbers are, it should be noted that the random week the study surveyed featured front page stories about Black Lives Matter, the replacement of the toppled statue of the slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol, and the appeal over the British citizenship of the Muslim mother, Shamima Begum. Arguably all stories that disproportionately had a racialised element to them.

And finally, at the time of writing, there is not one single major television news bulletin from the BBC’s Breakfast News, One O’clock, Six O’clock or Ten O’clock to Channel 4’s Seven O’ Clock to any of ITV’s major bulletins or Channel 5’s which is headed by a person of colour in the position of editor with overall editorial control.

Despite the low number of Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists in mainstream news organisations, all the interviewees for this study seemed to believe that racially diverse talent at entry level were available and underutilised: “It is very anecdotal, but the data seems to indicate there’s plenty of ethnic minority talent.”

However, there were differences of opinion among interviewees whether racially diverse talent was available for senior positions, with opinions ranging from; “Within journalism, there seems to be a limited pool of people who could step into that those really senior jobs,” to “The [senior] talent is out there quite clearly the talent is out there”.

Reasons to believe racially diverse talent is available at various levels

Strikingly, the difference in perception between interviewees as to whether there is suitable Black, Asian and Global Majority talent to fill senior roles often depended on the ethnicity of the interviewee and whether they had worked in non-mainstream ethnically focused media organisations. In general white interviewees who had only worked in mainstream media companies were more negative about the available Black Asian and Global Majority talent available at senior levels, versus Black Asian and Global Majority talent who had worked in non-mainstream media companies.

One Black, Asian and Global Majority interviewee described the situation accordingly: “The further up you go, the harder it gets, it’s really easy to fill entry level jobs... it gets harder [but] not impossible”. While another Black Asian and Global Majority interviewee said suitable candidates at senior level are available, pointing out that they personally knew of award-winning journalists who struggled to work for mainstream news organisations.

A brief examination of the current data around the issue may explain this difference in perception with important evidence pointing to a strong pipeline of diverse journalistic talent that could be employed supporting the view of Black, Asian and Global Majority interviewees who had experience of working at a range of different types of media organisations.

High Rate of Black Asian and Global Majority Journalism Graduates

According to (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2017), “82% of undergraduate journalism students who gave their ethnicity were white, with 8% black, 4% Asian and 6% other.” While this is a slightly higher proportion of white students than for other undergraduate subjects (79%) it is still significantly lower than the estimates of 92% and 94% (quoted earlier) of the proportion of working journalists who are white.

Qualified Black Asian and Global Majority Journalists Simply Can't Find Work

Other statistics also seem to suggest that the Black, Asian and Global Majority talent is available and the failure to recruit them should not be framed as a 'pipeline' issue but one in which white journalism students are disproportionately favoured over the Black and Global Majority counterparts. Douglas (2021) quotes the findings that “figures from 2014/15 on the likelihood of journalism students being employed as a journalist six months after graduation indicate that white students have a 26% chance, while black students only have an 8% chance” (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2017).

Black, Asian and Global Majority Journalists Are Working For Non-Mainstream News Organisations

Labour Force Survey data shows “87% of journalists come from white ethnic groups, the same proportion as across all UK workers (87 per cent)” (National Council for the Training of Journalists , 2022). At first this would appear to contradict all the preceding statistics quoted about the lack of ethnic diversity among journalists, until one realises that this data covers all working, employed and self-employed journalists, including those working full-time and part-time. This would indicate that there is a high number of Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists working outside the mainstream employers or who are chronically 'under-employed'.

Taken together, the Labour Force Survey data, combined with the research conducted by the NCTJ, point to a large potential pool of Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists who are qualified, and available for work.

The idea that the available Black, Asian and Global Majority talent is not available can become a self-reinforcing cycle, especially at more senior levels, in which suitable candidates cannot be found because they were not given the job opportunities earlier points in their careers. However we believe the belief that there is a pipeline problem points more to an issue of subjective normative standards of what an appropriate journalist “should have done” and what experience makes a suitable candidate, as opposed to the skills they objectively need to fulfil these roles. Anecdotally this is seen from the career trajectories of senior Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists who often do not have conventional career paths.

This would indicate that 1) existing job advertisements are indeed failing to attract Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists and/or 2) if hired, Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists are not being retained.

Therefore, the next question must be why is this pool of racially diverse talent not being attracted to job adverts by mainstream news organisations or, why are the right calibre of talent that newsrooms are looking for not applying? Retention is also discussed at a later point in the report.

Six reasons existing job advertisements fail to attract an ethnically diverse range of applicants

All our research points to a large untapped pool of Black Asian and Global Majority journalists who are not attracted by current job adverts in the sector.

In interviews conducted for this research it was clear that there are lower response rates to job advertisements from Black, Asian and Global Majority candidates compared to their white counterparts for journalism job postings by NBAJ members. One senior executive responsible for staff and recruitment told this report: “I don’t think there’s a limited talent pool. But there might be a limited number of people who have come from certain backgrounds who don’t see journalism as an option for them, that still have to be reached, in order to broaden that talent pool.”



Quantitative comparison of response rates between the different member organisations however was not possible for this study as not all of the members were in a position to supply the relevant data.

Anecdotally interviewees working for different NBAJ member organisations saw the lower response rate of Black, Asian and Global Majority candidates differently, with some viewing it as a “big problem” while others thought there was not a large disparity between applicants’ ethnicity and the overall demographics of the population.

All interviewees of the member organisations however wanted to improve the response rate to their respective job advertisements whether that was in terms of total numbers, or quality of candidates, or both. They all saw increasing the quantity and quality of Black, Asian and Global Majority candidates responding to job postings as a key component in increasing the ethnic diversity of their journalists.

Through the course of the interviews this study identified five key reasons as to why current job advertisements for journalism places are not attracting the quantity and quality of ethnically diverse talent that news organisations are currently aiming for:

1. **Poor diversity statements**
2. **Poor internal understanding of the need for diversity in journalism**
3. **Poor trust in the organisation**
4. **Poor choice of advertising platforms**
5. **Informal recruiting methods undermining diversity efforts**
6. **Poor language and other points of consideration**

1. Poor diversity statements

It is now industry standard practice to include “diversity statements” in job advertisements.

The statements broadly fall into three overlapping categories which can be labelled ‘**WHAT**’, ‘**HOW**’ and ‘**WHY**’.

The ‘**WHAT**’ statements affirm an organisations’ commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The **'HOW'** statements explain how the organisation is trying to increase diversity.

The **'WHY'** statements outline why an organisation is committed to diversity.

An example of a **'WHAT'** statement can be seen in the standard paragraph which is contained in most NewsUK job advertisements: "We champion diversity and inclusion, we strive to maximise and encourage every individual's potential and ensure everyone feels valued. We support this through our Diversity Board, D&I strategy & training, creating more diverse content and our intern and apprenticeship programmes. We also have 9 employee-led networks; Cultural Diversity, News is Out, GenZ, Sustainability Champions, News for Parents, Women in Tech, NewsUK Christian Fellowship, Women's Steering Group and Disability network" (News UK , 2023).

The Guardian regularly uses **'HOW'** diversity statements in their job advertisements: "We value and respect all differences (seen and unseen) in all people at the Guardian. We aspire to have inclusive working experiences and an environment that reflects the audience we serve, where our people have equal access to career development opportunities, their voices are heard and can contribute to our future. The Guardian actively encourages applications from **'B.A.M.E'** candidates" (The Guardian, 2023).

While the Mirror (part of REACH) is a good example of an organisation which uses **'WHY'** statements: "Reach plc believes diversity brings benefits for our customers, our business and our people. This is why we are committed to being an inclusive employer and encourage applications from all suitable applicants irrespective of background, circumstances, age, disability, gender identity, ethnicity, religion or belief and sexual orientation" (Reach PLC, 2023).

Despite the ubiquity of these different types of job adverts there is very little evidence that they are effective in increasing the number of applicants from underrepresented groups applying, nor their effectiveness in increasing the number of appointments from under-represented groups. There is also some evidence that they may even have the reverse effect.

As mentioned earlier, Harvard Business Review (2016) issued a report on how prospective candidates respond to diversity statements in advertising. "We know a lot about how effective these diversity statements are, and, unfortunately, the answer is 'not very.' They can even backfire by making organisations less likely to notice discrimination."

Pertinent to this study is a report by Lewis & Tong (2021) which looks at how prospective candidates viewed diversity statements in job advertisements.

Surveying 764 “people of colour” in April 2021 in the US the authors found widespread scepticism among prospective employees on diversity statements summarising the overall response by quoting one respondent who stated: “Diversity and inclusion is more than a statement,” adding “a company needs to show how they have embraced diversity and inclusion, not just print the standard blurb on a job description” (Lewis & Tong, 2021).

Interestingly this scepticism was shared by some of the people interviewed by the LHC working in mainstream news organisations responsible for increasing diversity which, in theory, the diversity statements are referring to. “It’s like [if] you [the advertisements] have to say something like that. Does it feel authentic? I don’t know. I don’t probably think it does.”

In reference to scepticism Lewis & Tong (2021) tested the difference in response to two different types of statement, one which they labelled “generic” and the other which they labelled “empathetic”.

They showed participants two different statements, one “generic” and one “empathetic”. The “generic” statement was modelled on a statement used by the United States government Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2023)

and was similar in tone to all three statements mentioned earlier and used by NewsUK, The Guardian and the Mirror. In terms of content, the statement is a **‘WHAT’** statement. The advertisement read:

“[Company] is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, retaliation, parental status, military service, or other non-merit factor.”

The second ‘empathetic’ statement that the authors showed the participants was modelled on a job advertisement by (Hubspot , 2020) and read:

“There’s no such thing as a perfect candidate, so don’t let imposter syndrome hold you back. You don’t need 100% of the preferred qualifications to add incredible value to our team. Our customers come from all different backgrounds, and so do our employees. If you’re passionate about what you could accomplish here, we’d love to hear from you” (Hubspot , 2020).

Comparing the response to the two statements the authors concluded that the response to the generic diversity and inclusion statement paled in comparison to a more “empathetic” DEI statement across a range of industries, roles, and career stages.

The study found that less than half (48%) of respondents had a favourable reaction to the “generic” statement, while two-thirds (67%) of the people surveyed responded positively to the “empathetic” version (Lewis & Tong, 2021).

When asked what impression the two different statements gave the respondents about the imaginary companies 44% of respondents had a positive impression of the potential employer after reading the generic diversity statement compared with 71% after reading the “empathetic” statement.

Importantly only two fifths (40%) of respondents believed the company employing the “generic” statement were sincere about diversity, the use of the empathetic statement increased that number by 50% to three fifths.

Lewis & Tong (2021) therefore concluded that “empathetic” diversity statements should be used to replace the more conventional “generic statements”.

However, the LHC believes that this may not be the most important conclusion to draw from Lewis & Tong.

In their study, one participant stated: “The first [“generic” statement] felt obligatory, the second [“empathetic] felt human” (Lewis & Tong, 2021).

Another participant was quoted as saying; “Does the statement sound like a requirement from the Legal Dept, or does it sound like a real human wrote it? The more human, the more I am apt to believe there is a real value placed on D&I” (Lewis & Tong, 2021).

Again, this was a view echoed by senior executives interviewed by the LHC: “I don’t think they [diversity statements] make any difference, because everybody expects you to write it... I mean, you have to do it legally. And you have to do it so that people think that all applications are welcome.”

This would suggest that the biggest obstacle that companies face in crafting any job advertisement diversity statements is overcoming the scepticism that potential applicants have that they are not sincere and are simply “cut and pasted”.

We believe that the 'empathetic' adverts were not viewed more favourably because they were empathetic per se, but because they were notably different from the diversity statements most people are used to seeing, and therefore were not perceived as being "cut and pasted". If empathetic statements become more commonplace they too will be recognised as simply being "cut and pasted" and will suffer the same scepticism.

We conclude that the only long term way to address the scepticism associated with "cut and paste" diversity statements is to make them more bespoke.

The overall purpose of any diversity statement in job adverts should be to convey the company's sincerity and commitment to diversity and have the effect of positively encouraging people from under-represented groups to apply. Simply "cutting and pasting" generic or empathetic diversity statements will fail to achieve these goals.

2. Poor understanding of the need for diversity in journalism

Despite the fact that all the interviewees professed to want more ethnic diversity, it was often unclear why they wanted it. This lack of clarity was present with interviewees at various levels including editors and line managers directly responsible for overseeing journalists. Several interviewees framed the need for diversity as one of needing to reflect the audience but were unclear on how increased diversity can help them to be better at their job and deliver better journalism in the short term.

We believe that being able to articulate a clear and coherent message as to why a company needs diversity is critical for how editors will approach hiring decisions. Being able to articulate how the newsroom believes diversity will produce better journalism will shift organisational behaviour and beliefs, as well as giving diverse candidates a reason to apply to be journalists at an organisation. Diversity and inclusion need to be valued throughout the company by all members at a behavioural level and importantly, not be regarded as conflicting with other organisational goals and cultural values.

Please note that the need for diversity should be framed in terms of how it improves journalism. The editors and line managers in newsrooms are directly employed for their journalistic skills and knowledge, not for their views on racism. Similarly, journalists, irrespective of their protected characteristics, want to be employed for the quality of their journalism. Therefore, any appeal to increase diversity must be framed in the core reason for the role.

Returning to the issue of diversity statements, based on the research by Lewis & Tong (2021)., we believe that **'WHY'** statements are stronger than **'WHAT'** and **'HOW'** statements.

'WHAT' and **'HOW'** focus on process and fail to address issues of trust. In the US study, for example, many respondents thought that companies often posted diversity statements for legal reasons, hence they questioned their motives. Similarly during the course of our interviews a common theme was that diversity statements were perfunctory and the motives of the companies were questioned. **'WHAT'** and **'HOW'** fail to address the issue of motive. They also fail to address why an employee from an under-represented group will potentially be more valued at the company.

Rather, **'WHY'** statements directly motivate people to apply for jobs and explain why a potential employee will be valued, directly addressing the scepticism that surrounds diversity statements. For example a **'WHY'** statement might include the fact that: "Journalism that doesn't include a diverse range of perspectives only reports half the facts and can misunderstand 'critical' issues - not just 'Black issues' - which is why we need diversity in our newsroom."

It is important that **'WHY'** statements are not generic and are as specific as possible - combatting the idea of being a cut and paste process (as explained earlier).

To this end it is important to involve the line manager of the potential employees for two reasons:

Firstly, it ensures that the **'WHY'** relates directly and specifically to the position being advertised and avoids generic statements.

Secondly, and possibly more importantly, relating it directly to the position being advertised forces the line manager to articulate why they value diversity and why the journalism their department produces will be better if they employ diversely. This will focus the line manager's mind on seeking out diverse candidates when shortlisting job applications and throughout the interview process.

For example, an editor overseeing health stories may believe their journalism would be improved if their team has journalists with direct knowledge and links to ethnic minority communities who are impacted by certain health conditions or outcomes.

Another example of why a line manager would craft a job advertisement specifically to the position being advertised may be that editors on their team recognise how certain issues have a strong racial component to them, or opinions on certain issues can be disproportionately "split" along racial lines. This could range from international reporting on the US Presidential elections to domestic reporting on the Royal family.

In the course of the LHC interviewing senior editors and executives at mainstream news organisations, the interviewees were able to express numerous and different reasons as to why increased diversity would be beneficial. One editor explained their reason for wanting more diversity: “As a white middle class, I know, my views on things and all I hear are the same similar views reflected back at me and I don’t think that’s particularly creative. I don’t think that’s particularly great for trying to attract and engage readers in a very diverse community,”

Another executive explained the need for diversity as; “Why do we want young people because we want young people to consume our content? Why do we want Black people because we want Black people to consume more content, why you want people from an Asian background, because we want them to consume our content, we want their, you know, we want their ideas, we want their understanding, we want their skills, we want them to shape our future, and make sure that our future appeals to people from diverse from diverse backgrounds”

In their heterogeneity, these reasons directly countered any scepticism around the sincerity of the reasons for wanting more diversity being “generic” or strictly for “legal reasons”, however this was not conveyed in any of their advertising material.

These examples would let potential candidates understand why their protected characteristics are appreciated and why diversity is valued at the core of the newsroom.

3. Poor trust in the organisation

The majority of the interviewees for this study saw the issue of the reputation of a media organisation trying to attract a more racially diverse pool of candidates to apply for jobs as being a serious obstacle.

In Lewis & Tong’s research (2021), two imaginary companies were invented for people to assess their diversity statements. In reality, companies have existing reputations which proceed them long before any potential candidate sees one of their job advertisements.

In interviews conducted by the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity (LHC) for this piece of work, journalists frequently commented that they would not apply for one company or another due to their reputation around diversity. This can be due to four issues:

1. Specific pieces of journalism the news organisation has produced in the past
2. Diversity “mistakes”
3. The news organisation’s editorial stance on specific issues
4. Or the industry reputation of how it treats its diverse staff

All of these points can undermine the trust potential candidates have in a news organisation and the likelihood of whether they will apply to work there.

While it is not in the remit of this study to explore how a news organisation can change its output, editorial position, or treatment of its journalists, we should explore how job advertisements can address the resulting lack of trust potential candidates have in it. This broadly falls into three categories:

- 💡 Trust in a specific specific line-managers / departments
- 💡 Trust in the wider organisation
- 💡 Trust that an organisation values a journalist's specific type of diversity

Trust in a specific department

The interviews conducted by the LHC pointed to the ability of potential candidates to differentiate between the organisation as a whole and the department and line manager they would work for.

One journalist of colour, interviewed by the LHC, explained how a sympathetic line-manager can ameliorate concerns they have about the news organisation when it comes to certain diversity issues; “If you know they’re supporting you, and you know that it’s really not just empty support, I think that’s, that has helped... Because you can just say, ‘I don’t feel comfortable with that kind of headline. And we haven’t done that story quite as well as we should do’. And sometimes they might agree with you sometimes might disagree with you. But yeah, I think having that support really, really helps.”

The ability for journalists to compartmentalise between the company as a whole and their specific section or ‘beat’ provides an opportunity for job advertisements to specifically appeal and build trust between a potential candidate and a specific department and/or line-manager. This is all the more reason why line-managers should be involved in specifically articulating why they value diversity and why generic statements about diversity for the whole organisation may actually undermine efforts to build trust and appeal to potential candidates.. (See sections above)

This may also make news organisations want to lead adverts with the sub-section they are recruiting for instead of the organisation as a whole. i.e. “The Sports Section of XXXX Newspaper is looking for a journalist...” Instead of “XXXXX Newspaper is looking for a sports journalist...”

Trust in the wider organisation

However specific job advertisements may become, it would be impossible to completely divorce them from the reputation of the wider organisation.

What any job advertisement is trying to do is not only inform as wide a pool as possible of potential candidates of the vacant position, it is also trying to attract people to work for the company.

So far, this report has primarily focused on the former but the latter, which is intrinsically linked to the trust that journalists have in an organisation, may and can be separated.

Addressing a poor reputation that a company may have around diversity and/or building trust in a company’s commitment to diversity is an important and necessary role of job advertisements. However, a common complaint among the people in a variety of roles we interviewed, is that there is limited space (word count) in any job advertisement to address this issue of trust, especially if it is simply part of the company’s diversity statement.

In 2001 the Society for Human Resource Management published a piece entitled “Diversify Your Recruitment Advertising” by Ruth E. Carter (Human Resource Management, 2001). The piece extensively detailed the merits of companies in the US actively publicising ‘**WHY**’ they needed diversity to attract a broader pool of applicants.

They cited the example of Microsoft who published a full page advertorial on why they were looking to recruit to increase diversity. Other examples cited in the HR Management report included full-page, full-colour ads in major magazines for Pitney Bowes (We’re Interested in Genius ... not Genes ... Genius Is Diverse ...), Prudential (Human Resource Management, 2001... At Prudential, diversity has its rewards), Morgan Stanley (Diversity. It’s Not an Obligation--It’s an Opportunity) and the Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. (... we believe that diversity is the cornerstone of a high performance organization ...).

While none of these full page advertisements directly mentioned any specific roles they were looking to hire for, they directly addressed the issue of trust that people from diverse backgrounds may have in the respective organisations and in so doing hopefully encouraged people to see the companies as target destinations for employment.

According to the HR Management report (Human Resource Management, 2001), a full page advertisement has the potential to cut through any cynicism that potentially diverse applicants may have about a company's commitment to diversity.

Human Resource Management (2001) points out that public displays of values can build trust. Therefore, a prominent advertisement can indicate a company's financial commitment to diversity. This latter point is even more relevant today as any full page advertisement will be published in a climate of a "culture war" in which diversity is increasingly seen as contested ground.

However, it should also be stressed that the media and advertising landscape has radically changed since 2001 and techniques like publishing a full page advertisement may not be the best and most current way to address this issue of trust.

While there are key differences between the United States and the United Kingdom with regards to diversity, elements of that research can be extrapolated and applied across borders.

What the HR Management report (Human Resource Management, 2001) identifies is the possibility, and in some circumstances even the need for companies to publicly signal their need for diversity to build trust with potential employees. Whether this takes the form of a full page advertisement, or some other form of advertising, will be dependent on the media environment the news organisation is working within.

Trust that an individual's diversity characteristics is/are recognised

When constructing a job advertisement, it is important for the line-manager to be specific about the type of diversity the organisation is targeting.

The word "Diversity" has in many ways lost its meaning, becoming a euphemism for a negative as opposed to a positive. Diversity as it is commonly understood right now means everything including but not limited to: "non-white", "non-male", "non-disabled", "non-middle to upper class", "non-straight". A survey of more than 1,500 workers in 2021 in the UK (The Unmistakables, 2023) found that 40% of respondents were afraid of saying the word "Black" when talking about race at work. And one in five also use the word "diverse" as an umbrella term while referring to people of different races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, genders, or disabilities.

If one re-examines the job advertisement diversity statements of the Mirror and NewsUK they both use the word “diversity” and are either non-specific about the types of people they are targeting or are so broad in the list of people it could literally mean any and everybody.

The Mirror uses the term “diversity” and then lists that they, “encourage applications from all suitable applicants irrespective of background, circumstances, age, disability, gender identity, ethnicity, religion or belief and sexual orientation” (Reach PLC , 2023).

With the inclusion of the words “background” and “circumstances” it is difficult to see who this does not apply to.

NewsUK uses the word “diversity” (News UK , 2023) and then goes on to list the 9 employee network groups that they currently have to demonstrate the organisation’s commitment to diversity. These employee network groups are; “Cultural Diversity, News is Out, GenZ, Sustainability Champions, News for Parents, Women in Tech, NewsUk Christian Fellowship, Women’s Steering Group and Disability network.”

Similar to the Mirror it is difficult to see who would not potentially fall into one or more of these employee network groups.

This non-specificity fails to demonstrate how and why either organisation values employing more Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse groups. It can even increase the cynicism people have around an organisation’s approach to increasing ethnic diversity as a white LGBTQ+ person may be seen as interchangeable for a white straight female or a Black disabled man, all of whom fall under the umbrella term “diversity”.

We believe that this will fail to generate trust any potential employee might have in how they will personally be valued at an organisation.

The Guardian’s job advertisement diversity statement is a lot more specific, stating in italics: *The Guardian actively encourages applications from BAME candidates*” (The Guardian , 2023). Previous research conducted by the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity has demonstrated issues with the term ‘**B.A.M.E**’ (Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, 2021).

The term ‘**B.A.M.E**’ can actually reduce trust - especially among Black British people - that organisations value and understand their specific concerns. At best it can be viewed as a cynical term used to “massage” diversity figures to an employer’s advantage in which specific problems relating to one ethnic group are offset by better figures for another ethnic group. At best it can be viewed as a benign lack of understanding that non-white people are not an homogenous whole, and individual racial groups are not valued in their own right for the unique contribution they can bring to any organisation.

All three diversity statements, in their lack of specificity, actively work against the need for **'WHY'** statements and why the company believes employing a particular person from a specific under-represented group will make the company better, and why that individual will be valued.

We believe the Guardian has moved in the right direction but its efforts are undermined by not being specific enough.

In this regard the experience of Channel 4 in advertising jobs for its "Black to Front" (Channel 4, 2021) project, (a day of programming dedicated to Black representation both in front and behind the camera) is informative.

The job advertisements contained a direct appeal to Black staff stating: "Channel 4's Black to Front takeover wants you! If you're Black and based in Wales, Manchester, Leeds, and London and are any of the following... (goes on to list roles)" (Channel 4, 2021).

Channel 4 also posted further advertisements about Black to Front which are best described as **'WHY'** statements as to why they wanted to increase their employment of Black people.

Not only was Channel 4 specific with **'WHY'** statements, it was also sensitive to small details such as capitalising the letter B for "Black". While there are valid arguments in different style guides as to whether the B should be capitalised, in general the capitalisation sends out a clear - if subtle message - that the organisation understands the concerns of Black people and values them.

Any changes to diversity statements will need to seek legal advice with particular reference to the Equality Act 2010. The experience of the LHC is that in-house legal depts, as well as legal teams usually used for media related issues, do not have specific knowledge and experience of the Equality Act 2010 and therefore tend to be overly cautious in their interpretation of the Act. For this reason we strongly advise media companies to seek outside specialist knowledge in the Act.

4. Poor choice of advertising platforms

Where to place job advertisements is critical not only in terms of who sees the adverts but also carries subtle messages as to who an organisation is trying to attract.

Interviews conducted for this report revealed that different platforms are accessed by different demographics. Respondents indicated that platform choice seemed to directly relate to age and seniority of the roles:

Entry level

Entry level staff seemed to actively go to the websites of the companies they are looking to work for. They did not go to LinkedIn or more general recruitment job sites.

Several of the more junior level journalists interviewed by the LHC rarely if ever used LinkedIn exemplified by this reaction by one journalist when asked about the platform; “I do have LinkedIn. And people have recommended using LinkedIn to apply for jobs. But I’ve never done that. I didn’t have a LinkedIn profile. I don’t even know what my password is.” Instead the journalist went directly to the career sections of the websites of organisations they were interested in working for.

While this would show the importance of companies posting their entry level jobs on their own sites it also pointed to the issue that if potential employees do not think of the companies as “target destinations” they will not go to their sites in the first place and will miss potential job listings all together.

This means that companies need to deploy specific campaigns to ensure that potential entry level employees deliberately access their job sites. This can consist of full page adverts (as mentioned earlier) (Human Resource Management, 2001), or industry events, or outreach to universities which are a key pipeline for new entrants. The targeting of universities should also go beyond journalism students and target subjects which will be directly relevant for specific “beats”, economics graduates for financial journalism, sports graduates for sports journalism etc.

Instagram also seemed to be the social media platform of choice for young potential entry level recruits with many not on Twitter. Looking again at the example of Channel 4’s advertisements, it utilised its own Instagram account as well as others’ to recruit for its Black to Front project.

Mid to Senior career level

LinkedIn was primarily seen as the platform of choice for journalists looking to apply for mid to senior level appointments. However, it is important for mid to senior level job seekers to recognise the limitations of job adverts placed on platforms and the role that advertisements play in seeking new positions.

Many interviewees at this level heard about possible job opportunities, not through advertisements but via word of mouth or being personally contacted by the potential line manager. Recognising the role these personal approaches and personal networks play can directly help to increase ethnic diversity.

A former talent executive for a major UK broadcaster, and current senior employee at a senior executive search company, interviewed by the LHC described the difference in importance between job advertisements and direct approaches depending on the level of the job; “for a more junior role, it’s almost 90%, advertising and 10% [personal contact]. For senior roles it’s more like 80% direct approach.”

A person who answers a job advertisement cold versus a person who has been directly approached about the role, and who has not had a chance to discuss it before applying is at a distinct disadvantage. Currently personal approaches are almost exclusively dependent on the social and professional networks of the people already working in the organisation and therefore only serve to perpetuate current biases within the industry.

We believe that personal approaches are an important part of recruitment. However, the inherent biases in them of people utilising their own personal networks cannot be countered by better advertisements on different platforms, especially at mid to senior level positions. To this end we believe executive search experts should be utilised. They would be able to reach out beyond line managers’ existing personal networks and they would be able to systematically target diverse candidates from under-represented groups.

New possible platforms

This report also sees an opportunity for news organisations to create a new platform to service the needs of the UK journalism industry and the journalists within it.

External news bulletin boards for journalism jobs do exist. One of the most popular of these is “Journo Resources”. NewsUK for example cites Journo Resources as being the most effective jobs bulletin board for attracting applications to its entry level programmes.

The resources available for journalism in terms of job platforms are still little more than online job bulletin boards and the information effectively only flows one way - from employer (posting an advertisement) to potential employee. This model fails to help newsrooms pro-actively seek out diverse talent.



The UK broadcasting sector, and specifically factual programme productions, now rely on platforms that enable two way communication between employee and employer. The largest of these is Talent Manager where broadcasters not only post their job advertisements but employees can post their CVs enabling two way searches. Talent Manager also enables the filtering of specific skills and particular characteristics if employers want to actively encourage people from specific backgrounds to apply for certain positions.

Interviews with executives at Talent Manager indicated that this filtering mechanism means that line-managers, and diversity and HR executives at companies are able to actively search for diverse talent “building lists of people that they want to work with.” as opposed to just potential employees searching out job opportunities.

This idea of seeing online platforms more as a two-way conversation between employers and employees is well developed in broadcasting but is not yet present in the wider UK news environment. Seeing how this type of platform has been able to assist in increasing diversity efforts in UK broadcasting, we would recommend that news organisations look at developing such a platform, or actively encourage external partners to do so as well.

The development, and use, of any new platforms will need to seek legal advice with particular reference to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and how it relates to ‘protected characteristics’. The experience of the LHC is that in-house legal depts, as well as legal teams usually used for media related issues, do not have specific knowledge and experience of GDPR with specific reference to protected characteristics and therefore tend to be overly cautious in their interpretation of the regulations. For this reason we strongly

5. Informal recruiting methods undermining diversity efforts

An organisation’s efforts to increase diversity through job advertisements at early stages of a career may be undermined by informal hiring paths. While everyone is free to apply to an advert, not everyone is starting from the same place, as the shortlisting, and most importantly the final selection and interview may be more of a “coronation” than an “interrogation” involving a rigorous hiring process despite the best efforts of a company’s HR and diversity departments.

In interviews conducted by the LHC, several editors of non-broadcast news organisations spoke of the practice of departments having a large pool of freelance journalists. This practice appeared to be less common in broadcast news.

The process of becoming a freelancer in this pool is informal and for the most part bypasses the formal HR and Diversity departments processes. The process consists of potential freelancers writing unsolicited emails with CVs to different section editors directly. The section editors will then give people a few shifts to “try them out”. The process by which the editors select which people to give “try out” shifts to is unclear and does not appear to be formalised. Interviewees also revealed that it was not unheard of to receive CVs from friends of family members. Depending on how the freelancer performs on these shifts they will then either be dropped or put into an informal pool which the editor will call upon when they need journalism shifts to be covered. Again, it is unclear how this process of selecting freelancers for the pool or dropping them out is conducted, nor what criteria is used to make such decisions.

When jobs are advertised, in theory anybody can apply - internal and external candidates. However, what the editor is presented with are candidates whose work they are already familiar with from working in the freelance pool who carry very little “risk” as they are a known quantity, compared with an external candidate who regardless of how good their application is will still be unknown to the editor and therefore by definition, carries more “risk” to hire.

One senior editor interviewed by the LHC explained the process in the following way “I would say that is almost certainly all word of mouth, which is again, very interesting in the context of this because that would be people who know other people who work in [the newsroom]. So it fosters kind of nepotism which is not quite right,” adding, “then when the staff jobs opens up, they’ve already proved themselves so they’re a step ahead of other people who are coming in for staff job”.

The end result is that despite job advertisements being open to everyone and the interview process being rigorously fair, the scales are disproportionately tipped in favour of people who are part of the freelance pool.

Without proper oversight and proper processes in place of how freelancers in the pool are selected, it is unlikely that it will not suffer from unconscious bias. Even the knowledge of how to apply will be unknown to entry level candidates without the cultural knowledge of the newspaper industry outlined in the previous paragraph. This in turn perpetuates the hiring of people from demographics who know this process and are already disproportionately “overrepresented” in the industry, specifically white men and women.

Until this process is changed, we believe it will undermine the best efforts of any attempts to improve job advertising to increase diversity.

6. Poor language and other points of consideration

There have been several studies (Harvard Business Review, 2016; Perkins et al., 2000; Amis et al., 2020; Andreassen, 2021; Lewis & Tong, 2021) that have looked at the use of “inclusive language” in job advertisements and even the formatting of job advertisements to encourage people from under-represented groups to apply. This can include replacing words like “manage” to “develop”, and removing bullet points (for example bullet points can be seen as a “check list” which deters candidates who think they have to meet every requirement) (Glassdoor, 2021).

There is most definitely scope in looking at exploring these linguistic and formatting issues. For example Lewis & Tong (2021) suggest adding statements such as: “You don’t need 100% of the preferred qualifications to add incredible value to our team.” This would serve to address the commonly quoted belief that female candidates (and people from other under-represented groups) only apply for jobs if they think they fulfil 100% of the requirements whereas white men will apply if they fulfil just 60% of the criteria (The Guardian, 2016). While this is useful, we would suggest that this type of point should be removed from any diversity statement and placed elsewhere in the job advertisement or else it runs the very real risk of giving the impression that “diversity” is associated with not having to meet all the preferred qualifications and that the company is “lowering the bar” for diversity.

However, in the interviews carried out by the LHC, inclusive language and formatting was raised in only one interview as being a primary concern in creating job adverts that appeal to a more ethnically diverse pool of candidates.

For this reason we have not concentrated on the use of inclusive language, which already seems to be standard HR practices for the drafting of job advertisements of NBAJ members.

Conclusion

This report found that there is an overwhelming view among employees and employers alike that the current “diversity statements” placed in job advertisements are failing. At best they are seen as inconsequential and at worst they are seen as cynical and legal obligations put in by the employer serving to undermine any trust potential employees have in an organisation’s diversity efforts.

These diversity statements and how an employer thinks about them must be changed as a matter of urgency.

The report has evidenced that 1) Black, Asian and Global Majority talent is available for news organisations to attract and 2) job advertisements are a critical component in an organisation increasing the racial diversity of its workforce. It also recognised that different policies and approaches will be needed depending on the seniority of the recruitment.

The report has also shown that job advertisements for journalism positions present some specific and unique issues when it comes to diversity and inclusion. These include:

- The practice of the informal creation of pools of “casual” freelance journalists who have better access to job positions when they arise, undermining the formal efforts of advertising roles to ensure a level playing field.
- Newspapers having editorial positions on issues which may be viewed as antithetical to some Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists.
- The importance of editors/line-managers and subsections of newspapers often being seen as more important for individual employees than the news organisation as a whole.

Finally the report highlighted that possibly the biggest issue around job advertisements, being able to attract Black, Asian and Global Majority staff, is one of trust. Trust that the advertisements themselves are sincere in wanting to attract diverse talent. And trust around whether the organisation is one which values racial diversity. The trust issue is also connected to how diversity statements are read and perceived.

There are no simple or mechanistic ways of building trust. Therefore, the study has eschewed recommending that certain phrases are better than others or suggesting a simple template to follow. Mechanistic and formulaic recommendations may work in the short run, but once they are recognised by potential employees as being generic they will undermine the very trust issues they are aiming to address.

Diversity efforts for an organisation must be sincere and must recognise the different diversity and inclusion issues for each part of the organisation and for different types of journalistic positions. In turn job advertisements should accurately and honestly reflect this.

Job advertisements can increase the pool of successful candidates applying for journalism jobs in mainstream news organisations in the UK but they must be viewed as part of a much larger diversity and inclusion strategy.



Recommendations

Diversity Statements

The current generic diversity statements which are a standard part of job advertisements do not work.

Diversity statements should be specific

Diversity statements should be specific, targeting particular forms of diversity. Describing all talent from under-represented groups as “diverse”, or making a “shopping list” of protected characteristics gives the impression that people, from what can be very different backgrounds, are all seen as one homogenous mass, and rather than being valued are simply seen as “other”. If, for example, an organisation is specifically looking to attract Black talent this needs to be stated clearly. Conversely if the organisation is targeting disabled or Black women, this needs to be explicit. Again, it should be noted that in the current climate the term ‘B.A.M.E’ is not seen as specific enough for many non-white people to feel valued.

Diversity statements cannot be generic and should explain why an organisation values diversity

There is no one reason why an organisation is looking to increase racial diversity and different editors, line managers and sections of even the same newspaper will want racial diversity for different reasons. Generic “copy and paste” diversity statements undermine the authenticity and trust applicants have in an organisation’s commitment to diversity.

The process of crafting a job advertisement should involve the prospective editors and line managers where they draft bespoke statements as to why they value diversity and why it would improve their journalistic output.

Building Trust

Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists often do not trust mainstream news organisation’s approach to diversity. Trust must be built up.

Public commitment to diversity

News organisations must demonstrate their commitment to racial diversity. This must go beyond HR policies that are not seen by the general public and/or diversity statements. Media organisations are in the unique position of displaying their values and views publicly every day in their newspapers (online and in print). Their commitment to diversity should be no less public.

News organisations must look at how they can publicise their commitment to diversity which will address any mistrust that exists. This could take the form of full-page adverts, campaigns on social media or public events (amongst other forms).

Building on the trust of individual editors and specific parts of a news organisation

Journalists are able to compartmentalise between the section/editor of a news organisation they work for versus the organisation as a whole. Where appropriate this can be used, building on the trust that Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists might have in the commitment subsections / specific line-managers have when it comes to racial diversity.

Job advertisements should specifically highlight the sections that jobs are being recruited for and where appropriate these should take prominence over the organisation as a whole.

Choosing appropriate platforms and methods to publicise job advertisements

Platforms and methods to make potential applicants aware of job opportunities must be tailored to the specific job.

There is no one perfect platform

There is not one method nor one specific online platform that all Black, Asian and Global Majority journalists look at to find jobs. The placing of job advertisements must optimise where journalists at different levels and ages look for work. The limited interviews in this study would suggest that currently LinkedIn seems to be the platform of choice for older and more senior journalists, while advertisements placed in Journo Resources seems best for entry level positions.

Specific work should be undertaken to assess the best platforms frequented by journalists from different backgrounds and at different career levels. This work will need to be repeated at regular intervals as tastes and the popularity of sites change.

The creation of “two way” employee to employer platforms

It is unfortunate that a widely used and accepted platform by which employers can post job listings and journalists can post their CVs, to be searchable by UK news organisation employers, is not available. “Two-way” employee/employer platforms in television for factual productions has proved incredibly useful for employers to identify diverse talent.

We would recommend that UK news organisations should explore the possibility of either adapting existing “two way” platforms or look at establishing something bespoke to journalism.

Addressing informal recruitment processes

Informal processes exist that currently undermine the best efforts of job advertisements to recruit fairly and diversely.

Formalising casual freelance pools of journalists

The current practice of editors informally creating pools of “casual” freelance journalists who then go on to have an unfair advantage when formal job opportunities arise, actively undermines efforts to increase diversity.

News organisations must address how pools of casual freelancers are created and ensure that the opportunities to join them, and stay in them, are fair and equitable. The formalising of this process can be overseen by HR or diversity departments and editors must be given clear guidelines on this issue and held accountable when the recruitment process is not fair, equitable and open to all.

Utilising Head-Hunters / Talent Managers

For more senior journalism roles it is widely acknowledged that specific talent needs to be identified, made aware of job advertisements and where appropriate actively encouraged to apply. Currently this process is informal and relies heavily on the networks of staff currently working in the news organisation. It would be impractical to stop this approach of reaching out to talent to apply to senior positions, however the informality means that it can be prone to creating sub-optimal diversity outcomes.

News organisations should complement the current informal practices of identifying possible candidates for senior positions by using talent managers and head hunters with diverse talent networks.

Ongoing work

Set up a working group to specifically address the issue of diversity in job advertisements

Diversity in advertising is an ongoing process

It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for news organisations to address all the issues raised in this study in one go. Changes to working practices and culture also take time to implement. For this reason we believe that the implementation of these recommendations should be viewed as a dynamic and ongoing process.

Oversight

Those tasked with overseeing success in this area could be supported with additional hires or training. Regular reviews should be held in order to measure levels of trust and progress in the hiring process.

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