

UNSTEREOTYPE ALLIANCE FILM BRIEF

Muscles, money, misogyny. Let's rewrite how young men are seen.

Background

The Unstereotype Alliance is a thought and action platform that seeks to collectively use the advertising industry as a force for good to drive positive change all over the world. Convened by UN Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality, the Alliance contributes to empowering people in all their diversity (gender, race, class, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, language, education, etc.) and addressing harmful stereotypes in advertising to help create a more equal world. The Alliance works for gender equality across the gender spectrum, including the LGBTQ+ community and healthy portrayals of masculinity.

The Challenge

The Unstereotype Alliance, collaborating with 240 member organisations globally, has been committed to eliminating harmful stereotypes from advertising since 2017. We've made notable strides in how women and girls are portrayed, but the representation of men and masculinity has largely stagnated or regressed over the past 75 years based on Getty Images research. This outdated portrayal in media contributes to a concerning rise in regressive gender attitudes among young men, fueled by 'manfluencers' promoting harmful ideologies, and a distressing decline in the mental health of young men and boys.

Our challenge is to address the disconnect between how men perceive success and how it is portrayed in the media. Research shows that 66% of millennial men feel that advertising negatively impacts their sense of success. A large body of research has also shown that the age span of roughly 15 to 24 marks a formative phase of life in which profound cognitive, biological and psychosocial changes are taking place. At the same time, these young people must navigate increasing autonomy, as well as forming their identities, developing relationship and life skills, obtaining education and career training and more. This is also a vulnerable time for adolescent mental health, as about 75% of mental illnesses emerge between ages 10 and 24. This critical period is an important window of opportunity to support young people, promote their mental wellbeing and help set them on a positive path for the future. Taking into consideration both statistics, we need a fresh narrative that reflects the diverse, current definitions of success for men, moving beyond traditional portrayals of muscles, money and misogyny.

We need your help to create a compelling film that redefines what it means to be a successful man today. This campaign should inspire young men, presenting success as multifaceted and individualised, and resonate deeply within the digital spaces where Gen Z spends their time.

Target Audience

Primary – Gen Z men (aged 18–27) who spend their downtime in digital spaces and on social media (watching content on YouTube, reading/participating in conversations on Reddit, gaming and chatting online).

Gen Zers are known for their social responsibility, dedication to social and political issues and demand for authenticity when it comes to brands and advertising.

This means that branded content needs to grab their attention immediately or risk being passed over for something else.

Insight

Today's young men are looking for new ways to see themselves in advertising. They want to feel happy, motivated, and inspired by what they see – not just powerful and rich. For them, true success is about finding happiness in their daily lives, building good relationships, taking care of their health and wellbeing and having supportive partners. However, the media and advertising often still push outdated ideas of success that focus on material wealth and physical strength. This disconnect leaves many young men feeling misunderstood and dissatisfied. They are asking for a shift in how success is portrayed, one that celebrates individuality and personal fulfilment over one-dimensional portrayals.

Reason to believe the above:

Research findings from BBD Perfect Storm New Macho's 'The price of success'

(<https://www.bbdperfectstorm.com/priceofsuccess>)

When asked, "How did you define success when you were younger and how do you define it today?"

a) Me when I was younger b) Me today", the top two answers for a sample of 18–75-year-old men from the UK and the US were:

- Younger: 23% – making lots of money
- Today: 22.6% – feeling happy and content about my day-to-day life

Strategy

We need a bold and impactful film to connect with young men desperately seeking role models, presenting them with new, empowering narratives of masculinity. Key points:

Evolves masculine depictions. Challenge the outdated and regressive portrayals of men in advertising and visual narratives.

Inspire positive change. Show young men diverse and positive examples of success and masculinity.

Counter harmful influences. Address the negative impact of ‘manfluencers’ and regressive gender ideologies.

Support mental health. Highlight and promote narratives that contribute to the mental wellbeing of young men and boys.

It takes just 1.3 seconds for Gen Z to lose active attention for ads – less time than any other age group, according to a global study by Yahoo and OMD Worldwide.

Key Message

Every man has his version of success. Let's show him that many versions are possible.

Personality

Authentic, Open-minded, Positive, Pragmatic, Realistic

Campaign Do's and Don'ts

A film that captures this new narrative of masculinity, challenging stereotypes and inspiring a redefinition of what it means to be a successful man in today's world. This film should be engaging, relatable and impactful, driving a cultural shift towards positive masculinity. We would like to end the film with a call to action (CTA) directing people to find out more at: <https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en>

Don't

- vilify any one expression of gender or depiction of masculinity/femininity
- present men criticising other men
- present feminism or gender equality as a threat to men
- call out specific brands/ads for being 'bad'
- refer to masculinity as 'toxic'.

Do

- present positive and pragmatic alternatives that authentically reflect what success means and/or looks like to men
- be constructive and instructive
- widen the aperture of what success looks like
- bring Gen Z together through this campaign – we currently see the greatest divide in ideologies between Gen Z men and Gen Z women than ever before; it's imperative that we don't widen this gap and pitch them against each other.

Specific Deliverables

Each team will be submitting the following for the Film competition:

1. a 60-second film – the original film advertisement or content, exactly as it would be aired.
Work that's not in English should be subtitled so that it can be understood in English.
2. A three-part written submission – to give more context to your work. This includes:
 - a. summary of the film – to summarise what happens in the advertisement. Don't comment on the brief/challenges/success of the film.
 - b. background – brief, objectives, etc.
 - c. strategy and insight – including the target audience and how your film answers the brief.