

# All you need to know to #unstereotype advertising

 By Leigh Andrews

11 Jun 2018

The Unstereotype Alliance launched at Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity last year and has just joined Twitter. The World Federation of Advertisers has also released a guide that makes the social and business case for 'unstereotyping' ads. Here's why you need to download, absorb and implement it, now!



The topic of unsterotyping advertising and using lazy gender tropes keeps popping up where creativity is celebrated, but it's sadly not mainstream just yet. Perhaps the fact that the Unstereotype Alliance has finally joined Twitter will sway the movement over social media.

Global brand Unilever popularised the hashtag in 2016 and it was the focus of a special report during the 2017 Cannes Lions, where the yellow 'Unstereotype Alliance flag flew high, with [AdAge](#) reporting that, "The UN believes ads can turn the tide in long-losing war for gender equality."

“ UN Believes Advertisers Can Bring Gender Equality <https://t.co/AqZsACy3vh>— Pelle Sjoenell (@pellesjoenell) [June 24, 2017](#) ”



Removing stereotypes in advertising - Unilever launches #unstereotype

18 Jul 2016



*AdAge* explained that the UN Women was effectively convening a 'Security Council of the ad industry', when the Unstereotype Alliance programme kicked off in Cannes, with the idea that advertising can "do what more than two decades of UN proclamations, local laws and good intentions haven't -- spur real progress on gender issues." SA's own Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, executive director of UN Women, added:

“ No country in the world has achieved gender equality, even though we have big initiatives and laws passed... Changing laws didn't do much to change cultural norms. Advertising has skill in behaviour change. ”

With support from other global brands, including Procter & Gamble, Mars, Diageo, Johnson & Johnson and Mattel, Aline Santos, senior VP marketing at Unilever, said at the time that having “left all Axe's lad humour behind,” they've since found that ads without stereotypes have considerably better results.

“ A big, brave, progressive play from Unilever. Will it still sell deodorant? I hope so. Time will tell [#UNSTEROTYPE](#) <https://t.co/qYVq1EcAd>— emmetohanlon (@emmetohanlon) [August 3, 2016](#) ”

It's also been a hot topic locally, at the Loeries Festival of Creativity, when FCB global CCO Susan Credle interviewed Debra Mallowah, VP of personal care at Unilever Africa, for our readers.

“ Fascinating talk by Debra Mallowah on gender stereotyping in ads and films. [#Unstereotype #loeries2016](#) <pic.twitter.com/6GNDsKxD6W>— #GoliathX2018 (@DonovanGoliath) [August 19, 2016](#) ”

Mallowah proved to be one of the year's most popular DStv Seminar of Creativity's speakers, "drawing cheers and even tears," when sharing the brand's message that the move to #Unstereotype advertising is good for brands and consumers alike.



Women in advertising - Debra Mallowah

1 Sep 2016



#Loeries2016: #Unstereotype advertising: good for people, good for brands

Lauren Hartzberg 20 Aug 2016



Editor Lauren Hartzberg reported at the time:

“ [Mallowah's] assertion was that advertising is the business of shaping perceptions, so when advertisers perpetuate gender stereotypes, they're holding society back. ”

And the message didn't end there.

## #Unstereotype the workplace, unstereotype ads

Unilever remains one of the most vocal brands on the topic, having gone on to urge world leaders to [unstereotype the workplace](#) and recognise that “stereotypes, social norms and unconscious bias are contributing to the ever-widening gender gap,” following their commissioned research into the importance of ‘The Unstereotyped Mindset’.

“ Obsessed with [#unstereotype](#) and wish more of the industry would follow- thank you [@keithweed](#) and [@unilever](#) [#mumstock17](#) — AvraInLondon (@AvraInLondon) [April 26, 2017](#) ”

“ Speaking of [#unconsciousbias](#) [#genderbias](#) [#stereotypes](#) <pic.twitter.com/MSq1faf5a5>— Unstereotype Alliance

(@un\_stereotype) [June 5, 2018](#) ”

Now, making the message easier to absorb in 2018, Unstereotype Alliance founding member [the World Federation of Advertisers](#) has released a downloadable guide that includes real-life case studies and actionable tips to take the movement forward.

“ *"Our industry needs to be brave enough to depict society in a realistic way rather than reinforce potentially harmful stereotypes."* ~WFA President [@dwheld](#) | Download our guide to progressive gender portrayals in advertising: <https://t.co/X8ETrbfND> [#Unstereotype pic.twitter.com/YkwaxOpVXU](#)— WFA (@wfamarketers) [June 6, 2018](#) ”

The guide covers typical stereotypes that exist for both men and women in advertising, with clear steps to start unstereotyping your workplace and make the mindshift, in order to start thinking differently in your advertising and marketing messaging, and ensure more progressive gender portrayals.

Unilever's chief marketing and communications officer Keith Weed commented on the launch of the WFA's guide:

“ *We've started to see real progress, but it doesn't yet go far enough or wide enough. Our job won't be done as long as ads still diminish or limit the role of women and men in society.* ”

Mlambo-Ngcuka, adds:

“ *We know that harmful stereotypes of both women and men have a deep impact on how we see and treat each other. Intentionally changing those images has huge potential to positively transform our culture and bring us closer to true, inclusive equality... This change will help us to collectively realise the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals – to leave no one behind.* ”

And yes, this is only this first step...

“ *"Addressing gender stereotypes is only the first step..."* WFA CEO [@Stephan\\_Lo](#) makes the case for unstereotyping ads: <https://t.co/YWuhGMhivl> [#Unstereotype pic.twitter.com/boYsr3vElw](#)— WFA (@wfamarketers) [June 7, 2018](#) ”

[Click here](#) to download the WFA launches Guide to Progressive Gender Portrayals in Advertising.

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## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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