



ACT 2 **un**stereotype

10 Ways to Unstereotype Influencer Brand Content



Unilever



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What are we doing?

In 2016, we, Unilever, launched Act 2 Unstereotype with one goal: to create a more authentic, accessible and equitable world free from stereotypes.

That means breaking the moulds and traditional systems that make us think we have to feel, look, behave and work one way. Because there is no single, 'correct' way to show-up in a world where we are all unique.

We started internally with our brands and in campaigns, and fought to eradicate stereotypes in traditional advertising. Addressing content featuring stereotypical characters that fed into outdated gender norms.

We know the world has changed. Creators on social media have shifted the dial, and real power comes from the way we—brands and influencers—work together now.

We've already worked to ban the digital alteration of images online. The body shape, size, and skin tone you see from us and everyone we work with is authentic.

Let's now work together to hold ourselves accountable for the content we put out too, ensuring everything we create is free from stereotypes, and celebrates the portrayal and identities of all people, and more importantly our authentic selves.



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What do we mean by 'stereotypes'?

Legally, there's a rigorous definition of what 'stereotypes' are—discriminatory beliefs about people based on characteristics and traits, such as gender, ethnicity, age, race, disabilities, and more.

But what does that look like in reality?

Stereotypes found in social media content can vary hugely based on different factors including culture, country, and current events.





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Common stereotypes that are often found online:

Gender stereotypes: assumptions and expectations about the behaviours, roles, and characteristics of individuals based on gender.

Racial stereotypes: including generalisations and prejudices about specific racial or ethnic groups, perpetuating biases and discrimination.

National stereotypes: preconceived notions about people from specific countries or regions, often relying on simplistic or exaggerated characteristics.

Age stereotypes: generalisations about different age groups, such as Millennials, Generation Z, or older adults.

Body image stereotypes: idealised, often homogenous body types and beauty standards that can promote unrealistic and harmful expectations.

LGBTQI+ stereotypes: assumptions and misconceptions about individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQI+ community, often leading to stigmatisation.

Disability stereotypes: assuming what one is capable of based on disabilities, visible and invisible, such as physical disabilities or learning difficulties.

Occupational stereotypes: perceptions about certain professions or occupations, often oversimplifying the roles and skills involved.



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Why is this important?

These generalisations on the page above don't reflect the full diversity and complexity of individuals and groups. They don't reflect the rich tapestry of culture.

Putting people in boxes based on those traits limits their opportunities and growth, and can have a serious impact on their physical and mental wellbeing and their safety. They reinforce inequality, but we can play a role in changing that, with the platforms, resources and reach to create systemic change.

So, we're going to ask ourselves important questions when we, brands and creators, work together to produce branded content.

What are we asking you to do?

We'd love to invite you to pause and reflect before creating and sharing content for brands on social media, using the following 10 prompts to ensure we don't unknowingly repeat or replicate anything that could be perceived as stereotypical and harmful, in branded content.

Let's use the platforms we have to ensure all audiences feel seen, safe and liberated to be their authentic selves as we work together. Let's eradicate stereotypes online, and make a more diverse, representative, and inclusive space.



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THE QUESTIONS: INFLUENCE

Awareness of my role & the impact of my content.

NUMBER ONE

Am I aware of the impact that reinforcing stereotypes could have on my followers and community?

For example, if I'm playing up a stereotype that relates to a community or group, even if it is a group I belong to, to make people laugh, such as women being physically weak compared to men, am I aware of how it could be negatively perceived and adopted by those unfamiliar with my work and/ or community?

NUMBER TWO

Does the way I'm describing or using the brand's product or service in my content play up to/ contribute to any common stereotypes?

For example, am I suggesting that a beauty product is only 'for the girls', or suggesting that a certain food can only be enjoyed if you're a 'gym buff'?

NUMBER THREE

Could my content be perceived by other people to be reinforcing stereotypes about others—their gender, sexual orientation, cultural identity, age, and more?

For example, have I perhaps innocently made a joke at the expense of another community or group that might be harmful or upsetting to them?



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THE QUESTIONS: APPEARANCE

How am I showing up?

NUMBER FOUR

Have I questioned the extent to which my appearance is influenced by, and is contributing to, stereotypical 'ideals'?

For example, have I challenged what I perceive to be 'ideal', and the extent to which I'm contributing to the belief it's 'ideal' in my content, such as flawless, fair skin in beauty.

NUMBER FIVE

Am I adjusting/ altering my normal appearance to 'fit' with my perception of the brand or product? Would I do this for my own content?

For example, am I hiding or playing-up traits that conform to traditional stereotypes such as feminine traits for wellbeing and beauty brands, masculine traits for fitness products, etc. Does the language I use and the way I carry/ style myself conform to a stereotype that feels inauthentic to me?

NUMBER SIX

Have I considered my influence as a creator with a large following, and how I could use this to promote a positive, inclusive approach when it comes to my specialism?

For example, if I primarily produce beauty content, have I considered that I could encourage people to embrace and celebrate what society perceives as 'flaws', such as acne? Have I acknowledged that it could be harmful to comment on my own 'imperfect' skin as 'flawed'? Have I acknowledged that everyone's appearance, feelings, and experiences are unique?



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THE QUESTIONS: AUTHENTICITY

Am I representing my real self?

NUMBER SEVEN

Do I feel that what I'm putting out is an authentic expression of self?

For example, am I censoring myself, concealing parts of my identity to 'fit in' with what I perceive to be culturally accepted 'norms.'

NUMBER EIGHT

Is my content true to my personal experience or perspective? Or am I adopting an identity that isn't really my own? Do I need to acknowledge the origins of this identity?

For example, could I be perceived as appropriating parts of other people's identity—physical traits, gendered traits, religious and cultural beliefs, and language and ways of speaking, etc.

NUMBER NINE

Does the brand/ product align with my values? Am I being authentic, or am I compromising, rather than collaborating? If so, why?

For example, would I promote a product that I don't believe in or use — a vaping product if I don't vape, etc?

NUMBER TEN

Is the brand perpetuating stereotypes? If so, have I challenged this?

For example, has the brand asked me to repeat language or promote products that conform to stereotypes? Have I challenged any stereotypes that might be perpetuated by the brief, rather than feel I must conform to them?



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