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- **For some years now Unilever has been leading advertising campaigns which aim to break down stereotypes in general. Why did Unilever decide to embrace this new way of campaigning for their products? Was there any resistance internally? Did it sell? How do you think your advertising helped to break down masculinity stereotypes in media and culture and promote gender equality?**

Unilever has started the journey to diversity and inclusion over 14 years ago, with the launch of the Sustainable living plan. It is clear and consistent commitment to diversity and inclusion as part of our business strategy, that stretches beyond advertising. We aim to contribute to a fairer, more socially inclusive world by promoting equity, diversity and inclusion. Our commitment extends beyond their people and operations. By 2025, Unilever plans to spend €2 billion annually with diverse suppliers, including small and medium-sized businesses owned and managed by women, under-represented racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ individuals¹². We are actively building an equitable workplace that recognizes the dignity and worth of every individual, providing freedom and opportunities for all to fulfill their potential. We reject any form of racism, intolerance, or violence and are dedicated to driving positive change in society.

In this context, we see advertising as one of the key vehicles to bring our strategy to life through the power of our brands which touch people lives globally every day. Our journey towards dismantling stereotypes in advertising started in 2016 and was reinforced in 2022 through our “Unstereotype Act 2” initiative. We aim to be recognized through creating marketing that influences the next generation to be free of prejudice. Research that Unilever conducted with Kantar showed that nearly one in two people from marginalized communities felt stereotype by advertising and this drove urgent need for change. Similarly, 71% of respondent believed that stereotypes in media were harming the younger generation.

In light of this, systemic change was essential. We rallied our teams internally to embrace inclusivity and challenge stereotypes to foster a more equitable culture. This wasn't entirely new for our company, as brands like Dove and Dove Men+Care had been at the forefront of this change for decades. It's now 20 years ago that Dove launched the Dove Self-Steem Program, through education, awareness, and empowerment, the Dove Self-Esteem Project contributes to improve body confidence and self-esteem, and has reached an impressive 35 million individuals. This not only resonated with our consumers, but also drove positive brand perception.

Unstereotype Act 2 is a company-wide policy, which brings this thinking across the whole marketing ecosystem. From consumer insights to advertising production, to ensure we are bringing inclusive thinking throughout. We are looking for more that impact through individual campaigns, it is about creating lasting change in the industry and society. So for instance, we look for individual agencies, production houses, film directors that represent different voices in culture, instead of relying only in traditional partners.

As a result, our advertising resonates with more with consumers in a personal level, and when that happens they are more likely to connect with our brands and our products. This is seen in how our brands have an enhanced brand image, and in the long-term this fosters brand loyalty and sales.

In the case of Dove Men+Care, the brand that I'm currently leading, we believe that breaking down masculinity stereotypes in specific, we can foster a more equitable culture for all. Since launching, Dove Men+Care has also been dedicated to debunking the stereotypes of how men around the world care for themselves and others. The brand is on a mission to inspire every man to experience the transformative effects of care and has focused on making that a reality through cultural initiatives, legislative action and community engagement.

When it comes to breaking down stereotypes, we focus on fostering a more positive vision of manhood. For decades, advertisement and media portrayed a specific type of masculinity, one which emphasizes aggression, toughness and physical strength as the values that make a man. But our brand has actively challenged that idea that strength is opposite to caring, showing compassion or emotion. Since our launch in 2010, we have looked to expand the vision of masculinity, and we were pioneers in a trend that has accelerated since the pandemic, of showing that there is diversity when it comes to men. We do this through our advertising, that has won industry award and recognition, all the way to community impact such as supporting men's right for paternity leave, giving men access to mental health tools (like headspace) or supporting voices which are not normally heard in culture, such as black players in the NBPA, all redefining masculinity and fostering a more inclusive understanding of manhood.

- **Can you tell us more about how the Dove Men + Care brands have incorporated the approach suggested by EQUIMUNDO and about the impact on the brand including how it is perceived by women and men?**

When we launched the brand in 2010, our first advertising campaign was celebrating the loving and nurturing qualities of father, showcasing real fathers with their children of all ages and backgrounds. Though that campaign and others that followed were welcomed with winning awards and helped accelerate the way advertisers approached masculinity, we realized that it wasn't enough.

To drive real cultural change, we needed to have impact in society not just communicating a message but doing something as a brand. This is where partners like Equipundo and others come in. When you merge the expertise of external organizations (whether for research, social impact) that understand the social problem and how to tackle it, with the scale and reach of Dove Men+Care, you manage to increase our ability to challenge stereotypes and promote positive fatherhood narratives. Through research, insights, and advocacy, Equipundo and Promundo have contributed to Dove Men+Care's mission of celebrating engaged dads and emphasizing care as a sign of strength.

Firstly, it's evidenced in our commitment to Fatherhood and Paternity Leave. In 2019, we issued a global white paper, in collaboration with Equipundo, exploring actions required to un stereotype and promote paternity leave and advancing gender equality. Our research showed that Men have a deep desire to be involved caregivers with their children benefitting greatly when they do. 87% of dads report being more satisfied with their lives when they can be the caregivers they want to be. However, uptake of paternity leave remained low due to barriers like workplace policies and

restrictive stereotypes. In the U.S., only 13% of fathers who take time off when their families grow received any payment from work. Among fathers who do have access to paid leave policies, many don't believe they can take their full time, if any, to care for their newborn. Our Paternity Pledge aims to make paid paternity leave a right for everybody. We created a fund to help support parents everywhere who didn't have access to paternity leave, we supported legislative change in Canada to promote paternity leave and more recently we launched "Dads" documentary with Apple, Ron Howard and Bryce Dallas Howard to bring attention to the critical role fathers play and the importance of paternity leave. As you can see, a whole ecosystem to increase awareness and drive action.

Secondly, on our support for men's self-care and wellbeing during and after the 2020 pandemic, we conducted another research with Equimundo about the barriers and benefit of men caring for themselves. We found that men what we call the 'ripple effect of care': men who prioritize self-care spend over 3 hours a day caring for others, they are twice as likely to help with household work and this positive impact extends beyond themselves to benefit their families and communities. With this learning, we launched an array of activities to promote self-care for men, such as:

- Commit to CARE now Initiative: Dove Men+Care's partnership with the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) aims to create a society where Black men and young men are cared for, respected, and supported
- Our Partnership with Headspace: to create a curated collection of meditations. This collaboration aims to help men incorporate mindfulness practices into a holistic care regimen.
- "Dads (They Care a Lot)" children book with illustrator Keith Negley. Encouraging positive messages of self-care and care for one's family during storytime.

Through these initiatives, Dove Men+Care celebrates positive manhood and challenges stereotypes, emphasizing the importance of engaged dads in society. Women play a crucial role in this strategy as supportive allies in promoting a positive masculinity, and they value the brand's efforts to foster care, compassion and emotional strength as signs of being a men.

I believe that for a brand to have impact on breaking stereotypes and changing culture, it cannot rely in advertising alone. The brand must take actions, and these need to be involving for everyone: men, allies, business owners or even government. Dove Men+Care's is a great example of how an advertiser's journey can transcend just personal care products. Our vision as a brand it's about redefining manhood, making all men feel represented and included, and promoting gender equality. We will continue to champion care for men as we know it has a ripple effect in all society. Thank you.