

BRIEF - AD VENTURE STUDENT COMPETITION 2018/2019

THE CLIENT

Let Toys Be Toys is a grassroots campaign that started on social media in late 2012. Set up by concerned parents who had met on the UK site 'Mumsnet', the campaign started with a simple ask of the toy and publishing industries: stop limiting children's interests by promoting some toys and books as only suitable for girls, and others only for boys.

Within two years, 14 retailers in the UK no longer had 'girls' signs or 'boys' signs in their shops or toy departments, and by 2017, 11 publishers in the UK had pledged to no longer publish books that explicitly say 'for boys' or 'for girls'.

Since those successes, Let Toys Be Toys continues to challenge gender stereotyping from retailers, manufacturers, advertisers, media content producers, as well as in schools and nurseries: there is a link between sexism in childhood and the way children see their place in the world.

Play is crucial to how children develop and learn about the world. In education, it's recognised that children need access to a range of toys and play experiences. Boys and girls need the chance to develop in all these areas, but many stores divide toys into separate boys' and girls' sections. Action construction and technology toys are predominantly marketed to boys while social role play and arts and crafts toys are predominantly marketed to girls.

Kids should decide for themselves what they think is fun and with which toys they want to play with. Directing consumers in this way is restricting children's play. It's easy for retailers to make a positive difference, and they should benefit too. Gender equality at all stages in life starts with kids.

Let Toys Be Toys is run by volunteers and receives no funding. They mainly work on social media, with over 33.900 Twitter followers (and counting), and occasionally appear on TV or the radio.

THE CHALLENGE

To encourage parents to challenge gender stereotyped marketing aimed at children.

Your campaign should make the target audience aware, understand and care about why gender stereotyped marketing to children matters.

It's all connected and related to inequalities later in life, and it's something all European citizens should care about and challenge.

How can we get parents to recognise the importance of offering a free choice of the widest possible range of play experiences to their child, and in the process encourage them to push back against marketing messages which would restrict their child's interests and chances to develop to their full potential?

Examples:

- The use of pink for girls and blue for boys
- The use of passive/soft words for girls and action-oriented words for boys
- Reinforcing traditional gender roles in toys (e.g. cooking and cleaning tools as toys for girls and weapons and car toys for boys)

THE OBJECTIVE

To move towards a situation where offering boys and girls a free choice of playthings and interest is a social norm, by motivating parents to challenge gender stereotyped marketing aimed at children.

To make parents understand that offering the widest range of play experiences to all children irrespective of their sex ensures the best chance for boys and girls' learning opportunities and equalities in life.

THE TASK

1. To encourage parents to challenge gender stereotyped marketing aimed at children.
2. To make parents feel good about offering a wide range of play and understand the benefits of doing so for their children.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Parents who don't think gendered marketing is a problem and are not engaged with making a change for their own children.

However, students must decide based on their own research what specific audience would be best to target to achieve the campaign's objective.

In addition, Let Toys Be Toys noticed that white middle class (educated) families seem to engage most with their mission, and therefore a focus on families with a different income, educational background and/or ethnicity would also be welcomed.

KEY MESSAGE

You can give your children the best possible chances to learn, grow and develop by making sure that they can play and choose their interests freely. Don't let narrow gender stereotypes limit your child's choices and chances in life.

tone / framing of the issue

Educational, Supportive, Positive, Not Judging

Let Toys Be Toys' tone is always reasonable and calm. The campaign does not tell parents how to raise their children. There must never be any blame involved – we're all in this together as so much of gender stereotyping can be unthinking, learned or part of cultural norms. So the tone is 'you want the best for your child/children' but in a non-patronising way, adult to adult.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE / DESIRED RESPONSE

'Oh, it's simple really, I can just make some small changes in how I give my children choices'

'I'll actively seek out non-gendered toys and books for children I know, and find out what their interests are before buying a gift or assuming what they want to talk about'

'I'll question, or challenge it, when I see advertising or packaging that suggests to my son/daughter that certain toys are not for them.'

'I never thought of it like that. I must share this with my friends.'

THE BUDGET

The jury of the Ad Venture Student Competition focuses in the first place on the strategy, research and creativity of your campaign. Therefore, you are

(theoretically) free to propose a budget to suit your campaigns' needs.

However, EACA and the client are very motivated to run the winning campaign live in 2019. For this reason, it would be recommended to keep in mind the client's financial limitations, by proposing a campaign budget which is feasible for them to support.

They would like to see the campaign benefit as many parents as possible and have experience in running successful campaigns with very little budget. They'd love to see the winning campaign go live across Europe and are motivated to ensure it is successful whatever the budget. However, as a volunteer-based organisation, they cannot guarantee any allocated budget to support the campaign. Funding through sponsor- and partnerships would therefore be recommended, but is not a requirement.

THE CONTEXT / BACKGROUND

Since 2012, Let Toys Be Toys has campaigned tirelessly and since then:

- 'Boys toys' and 'girls toys' signs have effectively been eradicated in UK shops.
 - A 70% drop in boy/girl tags on online stores to sort and sell toys online.
 - Won the BRIO prize in 2015, Care2 Impact Award 2015, Progressive Preschol Award in 2013, and toys and gender mentioned in the White House and UK Parliament <http://lettoysbetoys.org.uk/the-white-house-takes-aim-at-stereotypes-in-childrens-media/>
 - Started the "Toymark" award scheme to recognise UK retailers with good practice in marketing toys inclusively to all children and have now awarded over 50 shops.
 - UK Advertising Standards Authority are currently consulting on a new rule in the UK Advertising Codes next year to ban harmful gender stereotyping in advertising. <https://www.asa.org.uk/news/new-rule-to-ban-harmful-gender-stereotypes-next-year.html> LTBT submitted evidence to the consultation.
-

Interesting links:

<http://lettoysbetoys.org.uk/what-do-toys-have-to-do-with-inequality/>

<http://lettoysbetoys.org.uk/why-it-matters/>

<http://lettoysbetoys.org.uk/toys-and-learning/>

<http://derby.openrepository.com/derby/handle/10545/304844>

Other imagery used by Let Toys Be Toys:

<http://lettoysbetoys.org.uk/category/campaign-images/>

<http://lettoysbetoys.org.uk/tvads>

Other relevant public campaigns:

<https://livefearfree.gov.wales/campaigns/this-is-me?lang=en>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJi5VZqg7TY>

<https://www.inspiringthefuture.org/redraw-the-balance/>

BENEFITS TO CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPED MARKETING FOR PARENTS

Marketing may seem something that parents can ignore on behalf of children, but from a very early age, children are taking in these messages about what girls and boys are 'supposed to like'. They are looking for patterns and social rules – they understand the gender rule 'This is for boys and that is for girls,' in the same way as other sorts of social rules, like 'don't hit' or "say thank you". Some adults feel uncomfortable buying a boy a pink toy or a girl a toy labelled as 'for boys' while other buyers may simply be unaware of the restricted choices they are offered. They may not notice that science kits and construction toys are missing from the "girls" section, or art & crafts and kitchen toys from the "boys". If they're never offered the chance, a child may never find out if they enjoy a certain toy or style of play.

Research into primary age schoolchildren's attitudes to career choice has shown that, whilst the younger children were still expressing their career ambitions in terms of fantasy roles that were clearly stereotypical in most cases, the older age group were also predominantly talking about job roles that they saw around them and roles that conformed to stereotypical gender roles, such as psychology for girls, working outdoors for boys, and teaching for both genders.

We often hear from people insistent that there is a hardwired biological difference: we argue that it doesn't matter whether boys and girls are innately

predisposed to like different things. There is never any justification in directing children's choices by gender. If they're naturally different, then that will appear naturally, and we don't need to instruct them. No research has ever suggested anything more than a general tendency, so even if you believe in a mould, many children don't fit it (and no-one will all of the time...) There's no benefit in limiting their enjoyment or opportunities and spoiling their chances to learn?

When we tell children that some toys or play are 'for girls' or 'for boys', we're teaching them that gender is a good guide to their decision making. It's hardly surprising if young people grow up thinking they need to apply the same logic to their interests, school studies or career choices.

GENDER EQUALITY IN NUMBERS

- [A study from Welsh organisation Chwarae Teg](#) in 2013 found that the **majority of both girls and boys agreed with the statement that there are jobs only boys can do and some jobs only girls can do**. Children also tended to demonstrate perceived links between girls and service roles and boys and skilled jobs.
- In 2015, [the Young Women's Trust](#) found one in three young women (18 to 30), think men are better suited to being an IT technician compared to **10 per cent of older women** (31 and over). A third of young women thought nursing and caring were better suited for women than men, while just 13 per cent of older women thought the same.
- Only around [20% of UK students progressing on to A-level Physics are girls](#). Only [28% of English A-level students](#) in 2016 were boys.

In England, boys are over three times more likely to be excluded from school than girls. ([Figures for England](#), 2016-2017)

Suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 45 in the UK. In 2015, 75% of all UK suicides were male. ([CALM](#)) Across Europe, 77% of suicides were male. ([Eurostat](#))

A [UK inquiry into boy's reading](#) found that boys' underachievement in reading is associated with: "Male gender identities which do not value learning and reading as a mark of success". It found that 18% of boys and 12% of girls think that reading is more for girls than boys, while 19% of boys said they would be embarrassed if their friends saw them reading.

- In 2017 toy catalogues, boys were four times as likely to be shown playing with cars, and girls were 12 times as likely to be shown playing with baby dolls. ([LTBT research](#))
- According to [research by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media](#), male characters outnumber females 2:1 in family films, in leading roles, screen time, and speaking time.