

Omo challenges traditional gender roles

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Scrolling through my Facebook News Feed, I come across a video of a mother mimicking animals to make her baby laugh, a father taking a 'before and after' photo of his two boys smiling at the camera before bedtime, and then crying like it's the end of the world as we know it just a few minutes later, a dad going on a father-daughter date while the mom stays home to study, and the list goes on... It's encouraging to see this element of play and especially fathers stepping up to their roles, not only as dads but as husbands or partners who seem to be increasingly sharing the load of not just parenthood but quite literally the laundry and other household chores.

Omo's latest campaign, 'Dirt Is Good', is based on the premise that with Omo Auto, just a quick wash can remove the toughest stains, meaning 'less time washing, more time living'... a life full of play and active, shared experiences with your family and friends.

More importantly, this message is not being directed at particular genders.

In an effort to move away from unhelpful stereotypes, the campaign seeks to 'unstereotype'. "We want to drive unstereotyping in our communications which naturally challenges traditional views," says Omo SA marketing manager Henry Muchauraya. "As a household name and brand, it's our intention to inspire and drive a conversation encouraging

more progressive gender roles,” he adds.

While he doesn't think it's a problem that gender identity is changing, he believes that it is a problem that advertising has not changed enough. He quotes Aline Santos, executive VP Global Marketing at Unilever: “Stereotyping in advertising is a prevalent issue for all genders. However, our research shows that the negative effects are most keenly felt when it comes to representations of females.”

Here, Muchauraya goes on to explain what he means by this and how the campaign seeks to address these issues...

■ ***How is Omo changing the portrayal of gender in advertising and shifting perceptions away from stereotypical roles?***

Unilever has consciously made a move away from unhelpful stereotypes to show a more representative depiction of the landscape and fluid lifestyles people live. At Omo we strive to be as diverse and representative of the households we service. We understand that the make-up of our families isn't typical and because we are aware of this we are better placed to foster better brand engagement that delivers impactful messaging and is resonant. We truly believe that shifting the lens away from women solely owning chores and bringing men in to support and further own chores is both aspirational and prevalent.



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■ ***In the TVC, although the dad does the washing, he only washes one shirt instead of a load, and it seems as if it's a once-off occurrence – that he only did the washing because it was a special occasion. What was the intention behind making it a special occasion, rather than an ordinary day? And how are you encouraging men to help with the washing, on any given day, especially when according to your in-house research, men are increasingly doing the laundry every week?***

Ads need interesting storylines. Using a special day helps craft an engaging script, one that sees negative tensions resolved. Our ad celebrates a present participatory male figure, be it a biological father, uncle or positive male – we see a progressive male, helping out with the chores and not being phased by the stresses associated with looking after a child and tending to the house. The father is modelling progressive behaviour. We are celebrating this so as to shift perceptions and make this normative behaviour.



▣ Why did you decide to start a social media campaign on the back of the TVC, and to get male celebrities involved?

We really wanted to land the male participation in our communication. And it only made sense to use men like Lupi Ngcayisa, Thapelo Mokoena, Terence Mentor and Siya Kolisi. Men who are active and present father and family men who display the modern concept of dadhood, whilst embracing #DirtIsGood; embracing shared experiences with their kids and landing 'less time washing and more time living' using authentic male and female personalities.

The social media element is a component of this integrated campaign. Using male influencers posting active, shared experiences with their children lands the campaign idea of less time washing, more time living. This idea is landed whilst driving 'unstereotype'.



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▣ Besides men helping with the laundry, why does the campaign also encourage play?

Because:

- 79% of mums believe the importance of children learning through play and other unstructured activities has been forgotten in their country
- 77% are concerned children are growing up too quickly
- 73% say given a choice their child would choose to play outdoors rather than inside
- 54% of mums want more time for their children to behave like children
- The campaign claim is: Just a Quick Wash for Tough Stain Removal
- The campaign idea is less time washing, more time living. The campaign idea is, therefore, a call to action. Spend time living life to the fullest. We believe that means a life full of play and active shared experiences.



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▣ What's next?

The ground is fertile for more conversation around this topic and encouraging parents to play more with their kids, as well as obviously a more progressive display of gender roles. We are looking forward to working with social organisations to drive conversation and activity around #DirtIsGood and shared experiences. We are excited for what is to come this year and in years to come. We are really looking forward to engaging with our customers in a more tangible way.

For more, visit [Omo.com](https://omo.com), or follow Omo on [Facebook](https://facebook.com/omo), [YouTube](https://youtube.com/omo) and/or [Twitter](https://twitter.com/omo).

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