# Marketing’s evolving masculinity narrative linked to rising mental health risks in young men



For decades, mainstream marketing has projected a particular narrative aimed at men, promoting the ideals of success measured by wealth, physical fitness, and relentless ambition. These messages, encapsulated in slogans like “Impossible is nothing” and “Fuel your ambition”, have pervaded various forms of media, reaching audiences through advertisements on buses, in gyms, and on sports attire. However, these themes, largely informed by the entertainment industry—from Hollywood action heroes to influential entrepreneurs—have been further amplified and commercialised by marketers, positioning products as shortcuts to success and intertwining consumption with lifestyle and identity.

Recent research conducted by Movember, led by Saul Parker, engaged over 3,000 young men across the UK, the US, and Australia. It sought to understand the influence of contemporary influencer culture on masculinity and the resulting implications for mental health and well-being. The study, released this week, reveals significant insights into the evolving landscape of male identity and its connections to marketing.

The report underscores that masculinity influencers have adapted the marketing narrative, promoting an ideology that is, in many respects, more insidious. This new narrative maintains the core message of aspiration—“get rich, get ripped, get the girl”—while introducing adversarial elements, framing feminism, softness, and societal changes as threats. Failure, rather than being seen as a natural part of life, is presented as evidence of a world stacked against men, fostering a mentality of individualism and self-reliance.

The implications of this distorted messaging are concerning. The research highlights alarming trends among young men, including higher rates of mental health issues and increased tendencies to use performance-enhancing substances, with participants being reported as twice as likely as their peers to engage in these behaviours. The pressure to conform to a hyper-aspirational model of masculinity is not merely a cultural issue but also a public health concern, as young men may resort to harmful practices in their pursuit of an idealised identity.

As brands continue to propagate narrow definitions of masculinity and success, they inadvertently create an environment conducive to these extreme ideologies. The research suggests a pressing need for a shift in how masculinity is represented in marketing. Rather than perpetuating single-dimensional archetypes, there is an opportunity for brands to embrace more nuanced portrayals that incorporate complexity, empathy, and interconnectedness. By celebrating integrity and emotional intelligence alongside ambition and drive, marketing could play a pivotal role in redefining masculinity.

The challenges posed by the manosphere reflect deeper issues within both cultural narratives and marketing strategies. The findings indicate that there is an urgent need to reassess the stories told about men, aiming to replace damaging stereotypes with narratives that encourage holistic definitions of success and well-being.

Parker asserts that while masculinity can be embraced in marketing, the challenge lies in reframing the narrative. Brands are encouraged to engage with a broader spectrum of male identity, moving beyond simplistic tropes to represent diverse experiences and expressions of masculinity. The hope is that by rewriting the script, marketing can contribute positively to the ongoing discourse surrounding male identity and help mitigate the adverse effects associated with the emergent manosphere.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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