



Profile

Team Name : PlayMx

Campaign name

A World of Pure Imagination

Campaign background

“[My wife] has a fierce passion for our children in realising their own dreams, not prepackaged ones.”
(PlayMx survey respondent)

Children begin using gendered labels as early as 3; by 7 their understanding of gender consistency is fixed, along with ideas about what gender means. Given how critical early years are for development (when gender is a fluid/non-binary concept), if parents want to have long-term influence on how their children perceive gender, these are the definitive years to act.

And how do children learn about gender? Through play. As children learn about a larger and larger universe, they use imagination to process and understand their world. Essentially, play is learning and its benefits are bountiful. Yet, while experts expound a powerful argument for play, playtime is in decline.

Interestingly, 73% parents we surveyed listed some form of imaginative play as how their child would actively choose to spend downtime. However, parents feel immense pressure to do the best for their children, 24/7. There's no parenting 'off-button' or manual, and sometimes it's easier to buy 'well-defined' toys that do the imagining for the child. But this campaign provides the support parents need - an alternative way of considering playtime and its place in their child's development.

Our children weren't factory made and wrapped in plastic: their identity consist of much more than being a boy or girl. It's time to think outside the toybox and see play as the vessel through which parents can stimulate and stretch their child's imagination. By realising that imagination is the most important tool for a child's development, the only toy as unique, organic and colourful as they are, that treats them as equals regardless of gender, the better we can equip them to thrive tomorrow.

Campaign summary

We want to educate parents to understand the power of imaginative play, so it's considered as important as environmental or health conversations.

We want to activate parents to reimagine their child's playtime by encouraging pure imagination and unlearn what they've been taught; play isn't about the physical toy, but what the act of playing means for children, who use imagination to unlock their world.

We want parents to join and say: don't let gender get in the way of imaginative play.

Additional information

Let Toys Be Toys began its story on a Mumsnet discussion forum back in 2012. We would like to bring the conversation full circle and re-involve the community that helped birth the movement. We are currently in discussions with Mumsnet about a collaboration with Let Toys Be Toys. Mumsnet has

903,000 registered 'Mumsnetters' to-date and are already collecting data on our behalf based on our own independent research, which could help build this and future campaigns.

We are also continuing to explore theories around how play affects a child's cognitive development and other health benefits.

Conducted Research

We felt that the best way to understand parents' attitudes was to actually speak to parents directly. Rather than decide for ourselves how parents feel towards gender stereotyping in toy advertising, we devised our own questionnaire made up of 10 closed, tick-box and open-ended questions covering whether parents feel pressure to consider gender appropriateness of toys, where this pressure comes from, who they consult for advice, what their children enjoy playing with and how they perceive current toy advertising.

We published our questionnaire on our PlayMx website, Twitter and Facebook accounts, and contacted a number of established parenting influencers to help with distribution, the questionnaire generating 124 responses. We also built a relationship with Mumsnet who have distributed the questionnaire via their insight team. On our behalf, and as part of their own study on gender marketing, Mumsnet has collected 759 responses thus far. We are excited to analyse this data and use it in our research to further shape our campaign ideas and insights.

As confirmed by our findings, LTBT's brief identified children under age 10 as most affected by the debate. However, we were also interested in understanding the bigger picture of childhood and parents' concerns as their children grow. We thus chose to target parents with children under the age of 16 in the UK only. As the majority of our team is based here, we felt that by setting ourselves some parameters in terms of location and choosing an audience we understand, we could easier source data in the given timeframe and use our insights as a springboard for future study in Europe and further afield.

In the background, we have also undertaken extensive desk research to ground our campaign, looking at academic articles, reports and health studies, as well as following trends, industry experts and conversations in the media. Combined with our questionnaire, we have built a solid data set from which we have pulled a number of fascinating insights, most importantly the cognitive and developmental benefits of imaginative play for children - the crux of our campaign. We also discovered that while parents considered themselves as feeling little pressure (3 on a scale of 10) to buy gender appropriate toys, open-ended survey questions revealed they actually do feel pressure'. This incongruent viewpoint helped us shape how we talk to parents and the supportive, non-patronising tone of voice needed to communicate our campaign.

Key consumer insight

Our research and survey revealed that parents feel immense pressure to buy expensive, branded and gendered toys for their children. This pressure mostly comes children (and their peers) and society, often disguised as 'outside people' or 'general culture'. As a result, parents often buy gender-stereotyped toys so their child 'fits in'. The issue, however, is that these toys limit the way children see their place in the world.

Conversely, a world of pure imagination is without limit and full of possibility. Through the power of imaginative play, children are free to build their own (and imagine any possible) future.

Prioritized objectives

1. To eliminate gender-biased toy purchasing for children.
2. To get parents to think about the power of imaginative play and how it will benefit their child.
3. To get parents to understand why playtime is important and re-evaluate how their child spends their

time.

4. To help parents feel proud about encouraging imaginative play above gendered or plastic toys so that a child can develop their own interests and identity for themselves.

5. To generate interest from parents and the media to draw attention to the conversation of gender and play in society and elevate their importance.

Proposed strategy & tactics

Strategy:

From our research, we identified a target audience that is aware of gender stereotyping but gives into pressure in certain situations. Our strategy is to create situations where that pressure is removed.

As guided by the Let Toys Be Toys brief, our campaign is built around two steps. Step one is to educate parents about the long term benefits of play - more specifically imaginative play. Once parents are aware of the discussion and grasp just how much play impacts their children we can move to step two, which is to activate parents to challenge the status quo. This means encouraging them to reevaluate their child's relationship with playtime and stop buying gender-stereotyped toys for their children, by encouraging imagination instead.

Tactics:

By educating them about the relationship between learning and imagination, and how imaginative play is the key to a child's development.

By activating them to come up with ideas about how to help their children play more imaginatively, and creating spaces at home that allow their children to engage with their imagination.

By activating parents to work with their children to make playtime unique to them and their interests.

By explaining to parents that bringing gender into the discussion of toys isn't a prerequisite for play and imagination is the only toy that doesn't start from this basis.

By creating a social media campaign that resonates with UK parents and gaining the local traction it needs to expand globally, with campaign activations eventually being targeted to specific regions.

By creating a fun and interactive campaign that both parents and children can engage in together, to foster further conversations around gender and play and position such conversations as a positive opportunity, rather than something daunting to tackle.

Campaign Evaluation

We will evaluate our campaign against five principles that sit under the objectives to educate and activate the target consumer.

Educate:

1. Referral Traffic: To LTBT website and social media accounts.
2. Reach and Awareness: Impressions of posts on social media.

Activate:

3. Conversion: Rate of entries to The Big Toy Mashup competition (see Creative Execution).
4. Audience Growth: Increased followers and members on platforms: YouTube, FB, Twitter, Instagram, Newsletter.
5. Engagement: Track use of hashtags across campaign events, competition.

Creative brief

Business objective: eliminate gender-biased toy purchasing.

Marketing objective: familiarise parents with superpowers of ungendered imaginative play and activate parents to increase their child's imaginative play time.

Comms objective: empower parents to make a stand - they know the best for their children - and provoke them to share their experiences.

KPIs: trending campaign hashtag, 2x national news interviews with LTBT, expected 338,000 social media impressions (26% TA).

Our audience: parents with children 3-6 years who understand the negative impact of gender-stereotyped toys, but feel pressure from their children, society, and other parents to "do parenting right", which sometimes means not following their own intuition for fear of societal retribution. Or a tantrum.

Insight: parents feel pressure to buy expensive, branded, gendered toys, many of which limit how children see their place in the world. Children use imagination to process and understand the world they live in. Through the power of imaginative play, children can imagine any possible future.

The change: parents will go from buying toys that provide an immediate moment of happiness to creating a world of pure imagination for the whole family.

Single-minded proposition: gender shouldn't get in the way of imaginative play.

Creative execution

Imagination Professors Freddie and Jennie invite children across the nation to take part in The Big Toy Mashup! Children get the chance to make a new toy that's as unique as they are at toy-making Imagination Labs, by using what's in their current toybox. By creating their own toys and rejecting the implicit meaning behind shop-bought toys, children challenge theirs and their parents' implicit attitudes towards gender and play.

The Big Toy Mashup will be supported by digital assets on LTBT's website, as well as a PR and social media campaign featuring a fun weekly competition.

Media plan

Target audience: Limited to UK parents aged 25-36, with children aged 0-6 years. This equates to a potential audience of 1.3 million.

Region: UK only for first campaign roll-out. This makes it easier to control the budget and means learnings from this campaign can be used to expand the campaign across Europe the following year.

Pre-production (June 2019)

Content set-up

Engage major players

Phase 1: Campaign Introduction (July - Sept 2019)

Launch The Big Toy Mashup

Imagination Labs to be set up across the country during the summer school holidays.

Ramp up content and drive competition on social media to raise awareness of the campaign.

Phase 2: Educate and engage parents (Oct-Dec 2019)

Increase engagement with the target audience by creating reliable content for parents on LTBT website.

Release data and research borne out of PlayMx and Mumsnet collaboration.

Interviews with LTBT, industry experts and influencers in the field for campaign exposure.

Phase 3: Christmas shopping (Dec 2019)

Provide support for parents to navigate prime toy-purchasing period, by updating LTBT website and channels with toy ideas and expert verdicts on popular toys.

Phase 4: Drip (Jan-June 2020)

Media

- [The Big Toy Mashup - PlayMx final entry.pdf](#)