



goat

## GOAT INTELLIGENCE

How young men feel about the role of online male influencers in their lives and communities

# MALE INFLUENCE

A study conducted by YouGov and The Goat Agency into 4,000 young men aged 18-34 across the US and UK

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Over the past decade, the conversation surrounding online male influencers has taken a negative turn.

From concerns around “toxic masculinity” to worries over their impact on mental health, we mainly tend to hear about the dark sides of social media as it pertains to men.

### **BUT HOW DO YOUNG MEN THEMSELVES FEEL ABOUT IT?**

As one of the world’s leading social and influencer marketing agencies, we’ve helped brands to reach and engage young men all over the world through creator-led campaigns. So, as we approach the second half of the 2020s, and as conversations around “male influence” continue to heat up, we decided to ask young men some burning questions directly.

**“With this research, we wanted to understand how young men are engaging with and being impacted by social media influencers, particularly as when the conversation around male influencers does arise, it tends to focus on negative connotations. We wanted to understand if this is really the reality of young men across social media and ask ourselves, ‘Are we accurately representing young men’s experiences, especially when it comes to the type of content or influence they’re looking to engage with?’. We found that the story is not straightforward, and we want to shine a spotlight on this, as well as help brands understand how to better reach this audience.”**



**Joanna Hughston,**  
Head of Marketing at Goat

Partnering with YouGov, we’ve surveyed over 4,000 young men, aged 18-34, across the US and UK, revealing their thoughts on a range of topics and themes surrounding social media, influencers, and their impact on communities.

Unsurprisingly, the results highlighted some problems. However, the outlook is positive and provides us with actionable insights for 2025.

**“The research revealed some sobering statistics. What is clear is that there is already a strong behavior of young men on social media today intentionally looking for more positive role models. Brands and their ambassadors have a real opportunity here, because these young men are not only open to, but actively looking for, messages that promote empathy and emotional well-being. Brands can address some of the negativity that often takes center stage on social media.”**



**Nick Cooke**  
Co-Founder and Chief Client Officer at Goat

# INTRODUCTION





CHAPTER 1

***YOUNG MEN ON...***

***TRUST***







## INSIGHT

# 47%

## *of young men trust that what they see on the news is truthful*

*vs 23% that don't*

Across the board, there appears to be a fairly low level of trust when it comes to news and media.

Shockingly, fewer than half of the young men surveyed trust what they see on the news to be truthful. This is particularly the case amongst our US respondents, where the figure drops to 43% (vs 52% of UK respondents).

This trust reduces even further when it comes to social media, with only a quarter of young men claiming to trust what they see on these platforms to be true.

We don't have the data on whether this is the case across all social platforms, or if some are more trusted than others, however it is telling that a quarter of

"Whilst on the face of it, these numbers look somewhat bleak, marketers should take note that young men trust the influencers they follow almost as much as they do traditional news outlets, and far more than the average social media page. This supports our belief that influencers are a powerful means of communication for brands, as they possess a relatively high degree of trust from their followers."



**Max Adagio**

Group Account Director (US)

those surveyed (24%) have changed the platform they primarily use to create a more positive experience for themselves (see more in **Chapter 5: Men on... Mental Health**).

## *Only a quarter of young men trust what they see on social media is truthful*

*but 43% do trust the influencers they follow*

More positively, this jumps back up again for influencers, with 43% of young men agreeing that they trust the influencers they "personally follow are truthful", compared to 22% disagreeing.

Across U.S., 25-34 year olds tend to be more trusting of social media than 18-24 year-olds, whilst the younger demographic are more trusting of the influencers they follow in the U.K.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Over the next 5 years, advertisers and creators need to prioritize building back trust amongst young male customers.**

This takes time, but when it comes to our influencer strategies, we can increase the possibilities of doing this by:

**1.**

**PARTNERING WITH CREATORS THAT HAVE CREDIBILITY AND INTEGRITY.**

Whilst it's impossible to know everything about everyone, it's crucial that we do our due diligence when it comes to the creators we work with. Much of this can be done through looking at their own channel, their audience's sentiments and comments, and exploring the types of content they've done in the past. But also for bigger ambassadors, it's worth going deeper. Online community platforms like Reddit can be valuable for getting a sense of what people think of larger influencers and creators, and this can help to build a bigger picture of who they are and how much credibility and trust they have.

**2.**

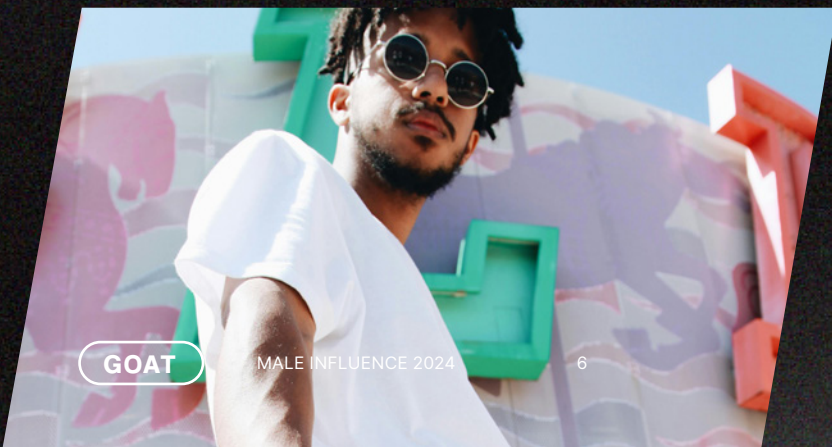
**PARTNERING WITH CREATORS THAT GENUINELY FIT WITH YOUR BRAND.**

Today's consumer is very astute and they can tell when a brand/creator partnership feels fake. Ask whether this creator/influencer has ever used your brand's products? Have they spoken about them in the past? Will their audience be surprised (in a negative way) by the partnership, or will they instantly "get" it, even if it's unexpected like the likes of Jacquemus x Bus Auntie Bemi, or Marc Jacobs x Nara Smith?

**3.**

**KEEPING MESSAGING AND 'BRAND PERSONALITY' CONSISTENT EVEN WHILST CREATIVE IDEAS CHANGE.**

Both the brand and agency team need to have a very clear idea of who the brand is on social, what their "personality" is across the platforms, and how they communicate with their audiences. This should be central to any campaign creative idea as it then feeds in to every choice; from which creators to partner with, to the types of content that's delivered. Of course, we want to push all our clients to take creative risks, be bold, experiment, and allow creators the freedom to do what they do best, but this can still all be achieved whilst maintaining the values that are central to your brand. In fact, the stronger these are, the easier it is for our Creative Strategy team and the creators we work with to come up with something that's scroll-stopping, but doesn't leave your customers feeling at best confused, or at worst suspicious. Because the more they see content and creators that don't feel true to you, the more this will erode their trust in your brand.







## CHAPTER 2

# **YOUNG MEN ON...** **INFLUENCER** **EFFECTIVENESS**



## INSIGHT

**64%**  
**of young men think it is clear when an influencer has been paid to represent a brand**  
**vs 12% that don't**

*"It's positive to see that nearly two thirds of the men we surveyed are confident in the transparency of influencer advertising. This is something that's really important to not just us and our clients, but for the industry as a whole. In the past, if partnerships haven't been made clear by advertisers, it has led to higher levels of distrust in creators and influencer marketing."*



Alex Burgess  
Global Managing Director

**1 in 5**

**young men cannot recall partnerships between brands and influencers**

**compared to 1 in 2 that can.**

Whilst more than double the young men surveyed can recall partnerships between brands and influencers than those who can't, it is clear that there's still a way to go for advertisers...

In the battle for attention on social media, a creator ad must be memorable if we want it to stop the scroll, and clearly many partnerships are just not hitting.



## INSIGHT

"At Goat, we like to think about "relevant irrelevance" when it comes to creator content. Think about how many ads there are on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, and how many you tend to just scroll past without even registering... But the best performing content will find the "sweet spot" between being highly relevant to your audience, but also having an element of surprise that makes you want to keep watching."



Jago Sherman  
Head of Strategy

# 54%

**of young US men can recall partnerships between brands and influencers**

**vs 44% of young UK men**

Interestingly, the US young men surveyed seem to have a higher recollection of brand/influencer partnerships than their UK counterparts. This could be due to more awareness of the influencer industry, combined with the fact that a higher percentage of young men in the UK responded that they do not follow any influencers at all.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Every few months, an article will appear predicting the “downfall of the creator economy”, suggesting that social media platforms have become too saturated, and that this spells the death knell of influencer as an effective media channel.

Well, we’ve heard this for the past 5 years and yet, influencer is more effective than ever... The problem is that many people do it badly.

### SO, HOW CAN YOU AVOID A FORGETTABLE INFLUENCER CAMPAIGN?

1.

#### CONSIDER WHY YOU ARE PARTNERING WITH INFLUENCERS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

If you’re just adding influencer as a byline to your media plan because you think it’s something you “should” be doing, chances are it won’t be that memorable... Where we see the most effective results is with clients that are truly considering influencer as a central element of their media plan. They think influencer and social-first, they consider how it will be approached creatively right at the start of a campaign (not after you’re halfway through the TV ad edit), and they use data to inform decisions (without ignoring the human gut feel!).

2.

#### THINK OUTSIDE OF YOUR ASSUMED INFLUENCER AMBASSADOR.

As our Head of Strategy, Jago, advised, sometimes it’s all about the unexpected. If you’re a sportswear brand that only ever partners with sportswear creators, your ads may start to feel the same, and overtime your results will decrease. But in balancing relevant creators with some unexpected partnerships, you can really grab people’s attention!

It’s the basis of the “Oddball Effect”. The idea is that when people are faced with “odd” or unexpected content, they think it’s there for longer. So don’t be afraid to push boundaries, test out new influencers and creator concepts, and be a bit bold - the real risk in the attention economy is not being seen at all.

***“The oddball effect is a perceptual phenomenon whereby novel or unexpected stimuli result in longer perceived time durations.”***

(Sage Journals)

3.

#### SHOW UP REPEATEDLY.

Ultimately, the world is a noisy place, and people are faced with adverts, content and media at every turn. It would be impossible for us to remember all the creator partnerships we’ve seen (even though often it lies in our subconscious, you may not remember it was that Instagram ad that convinced you to buy a different type of cat food...). For your brand to be memorable, customers need to be reminded! At Goat, we suggest viewing your influencer strategy in a layered approach, partnering with creators to develop content that will drive customers down the funnel from awareness to conversion.

You can also place influencer content in other media formats, or align it with your wider media strategy, including through retail media, programmatic, and DOOH to ensure you’re showing up consistently and repeatedly to give your ad the best chance of sinking in.



CHAPTER 3

**YOUNG MEN ON...**

**POPULAR**



## INSIGHT

**Comedy/Humor and Music influencers are the most followed amongst young men**

followed by **Food** **Tech** and **Sports/Personal Fitness/Health**

We asked young men which, if any, of these listed categories the influencers they follow on social media fall into.



GOAT

THE INFLUENCE 2020

### Category of Influencer\* you follow

	TOTAL	AGE		COUNTRY	
		18-24	25-34	US	UK
<b>Comedy/Humor</b>	<b>42%</b>	43%	41%	45%	39%
<b>Music</b>	<b>42%</b>	45%	40%	48%	35%
<b>Athletics/Sports/Personal Fitness/Health</b>	<b>38%</b>	39%	37%	40%	36%
<b>Food</b>	<b>38%</b>	36%	40%	43%	34%
<b>Tech</b>	<b>38%</b>	38%	39%	44%	33%
<b>Politics</b>	<b>35%</b>	34%	36%	41%	30%
<b>Entrepreneurialism/Finance/Business</b>	<b>27%</b>	25%	28%	31%	22%
<b>Film/Theatre/Acting</b>	<b>26%</b>	25%	26%	28%	24%
<b>Fashion/Style/Modelling</b>	<b>23%</b>	24%	22%	26%	20%
<b>Other</b>	<b>5%</b>	4%	6%	4%	6%
<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>3%</b>	3%	2%	2%	3%
<b>N/A - I do not follow any influencers on social media</b>	<b>12%</b>	8%	14%	8%	16%

Note that by "influencer" we are referring to "individuals or accounts you follow on social media (not a page representing a business or brand) that you do not know personally. They may have a large or popular online presence and are known for the content they create online, as opposed to being known or famous in another right (i.e. celebrity, sports star, actor, comedian)".



Our data shows that young men follow a real variety of influencers and creators, from foodies to fashion, and sports to film and theatre.

Whilst Comedy/Humor and Music still tend to be the most popular categories, it's clear that many young men are turning to influencers for more serious topics and life advice. 35% of the men we surveyed follow political influencers, and another 27% follow Entrepreneurialism/ Finance/Business influencers.

There are some variations between the US and the UK, with US men more likely to follow Tech influencers over Food or Sport/Fitness/Health influencers.



***"There is often a stereotype that young men only follow certain types of influencers (gaming, business, fitness, etc), but this is a clear indication that young men are engaging with a significant range of content/influencers. Over a quarter of young men in the US for example follow Fashion/Style influencers and almost 30% follow Theatre/ Acting/Film influencers.***

***At Goat, we always advise brands to look outside of their own immediate audiences and explore partnerships with unexpected influencers; for example a luxury fashion brand with a foodie influencer, or a tech brand with a fitness influencer. These can work really well and help to expand outside of your existing customer base.***

***It's also notable that 88% of the men we surveyed follow some category of influencer on social media, jumping to 92% amongst 18-24 year olds!"***



**Melanie Ropp**  
Senior Account Director (US)

INSIGHT

Amongst young men, the most followed category of female/non-male identifying influencer is **Food**

followed by **Comedy**, **Health/Mental Health/Sports/Fitness**, **Gaming** and **Lifestyle**

Whilst female/non-male identifying “Comedy” influencers are still very popular with young men (39%), it’s “Food” influencers that take the top spot (42%).

A high proportion of young men are also following female/non-male identifying influencers that focus on “Health/ Mental Health/Sports/Fitness”, “Gaming” and “Lifestyle”.



Category of female or non-male Influencer* you follow	TOTAL	AGE		COUNTRY	
		18-24	25-34	US	UK
Food	42%	38%	45%	48%	36%
Comedy/Humor	39%	35%	41%	42%	35%
Health/Mental Health/Sports/Fitness	34%	30%	36%	36%	31%
Gaming	34%	34%	34%	36%	32%
Lifestyle	34%	31%	36%	37%	30%
News/Politics	31%	28%	33%	33%	28%
Beauty/Personal Care/Fashion/Styling	26%	26%	27%	29%	23%
Tradwife	13%	11%	14%	14%	12%
Queer/LGBTQ+	12%	12%	11%	12%	12%
Other	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Don't Know	3%	3%	2%	3%	4%
N/A - I do not follow any female/non male identifying influencers on social media	10%	11%	9%	7%	13%

Note that by “influencer” we are referring to “individuals or accounts they follow on social media (not a page representing a business or brand) that they do not know personally. The influencer may have a large or popular online presence and are known for the content they create online, as opposed to being known or famous in another right (i.e. celebrity, sports star, actor, comedian)”





# 13%

## of young men follow Tradwife influencers

**A “TRADWIFE” IS A WOMAN WHO PRACTICES TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES AND MARRIAGES, OFTEN BY STAYING HOME AND TAKING CARE OF THE CHILDREN AND HOME.**

In 2024, a popular niche of influencer emerged, nicknamed “Tradwives”. The likes of Nara Smith and Hannah Neeleman (@BallerinaFarm) create content that celebrates and showcases them adopting traditional gender roles and undertaking “traditional wife” tasks such as cooking, childcare and cleaning. Now, some Trad Wives are doing this in a very tongue-in-cheek way (Nara Smith for example), whilst others such as Hannah Neeleman, appear to really embody this way of life.

Of course, there has been some backlash against the concept of Tradwives, with some arguing that it represents an unrelatable, unattainable, and backwards view of a woman’s role within society. Others who enjoy this type of content argue that it is simply showing a different way of life that many find comforting or inspiring to watch.

**“Sometimes people in our industry, even without realizing it, possess an unconscious bias when it comes to influencer selection for certain demographics, whether that’s gender, age, ethnicity, region... Working in our Strategy team, we believe it’s important to develop inclusive and diverse influencer campaigns; not only because that’s what we should be pushing for as responsible advertisers, but because they work! Don’t think that because you are targeting young men aged 18-25 that you should only partner with male influencers aged 18-25; this data reflects just how broad interests can be”.**



**Kent Maquiling**  
Senior Creative Strategy Manager (UK)



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings..

### WHAT SHOULD WE TAKE FROM THIS AS ADVERTISERS?

1.

#### AVOID INHERENT STEREOTYPES.

When planning a campaign that targets young men, ensure you aren't stereotyping and limiting yourself to male-only influencers. Clearly there is a big proportion of young men actively following and engaging with female/non-male identifying influencers in all sorts of categories and capacities.

2.

#### BALANCE YOUR TRIED-AND-TESTED WITH NEW NICHES.

To ensure you're continuing to drive effectiveness within influencer in 2025, have a clear strategy for how you measure and optimize. At Goat, we track and measure every piece of content's performance through our CRM and Data tool, IBEX. This means we can build a picture of the influencers and content that will most likely drive desired results for a specific objective and accurately predict what these may be. We can also then look to continuously maintain top performing ambassadors for clients, whilst continuously testing out new concepts, creators and creatives so that we're always optimizing.

3.

#### FOCUS ON COMEDY/ HUMOUR WHERE RELEVANT.

Across the board, young men consistently like to follow Comedy/Humor content and creators. In 2025, consider how - no matter your brand or product - you can weave humor into your influencer and social strategy.





CHAPTER 4

***YOUNG MEN ON...***

# ***POSITIVE INFLUENCE***





# 1 in 3

**young men aged 18-24 say that based on what they see on social media, they have a more negative view of men's role in society**

**and 44% have a more negative view of the world.**

Fairly shockingly, 43% of the men we surveyed aged 18-34 agree that social media gives them a more negative view of the world vs 28% who disagree. This is particularly felt amongst our UK respondents, with 50% agreeing compared to 36% of US respondents.

It's also impacting the way that young men perceive men and their role within society, with over a quarter saying that based on what they see on social media, they have a more negative view of men's role in society (28%) and a more negative view of men in general (27%).

***"It's disheartening to see that so many young men are concerned about how social media and the representations of masculinity they see on there could impact not just themselves, but their wider communities. We know that there is so much positive content to be found on these platforms, but perhaps more needs to be done to surface it."***



**Jaime Cohen**  
Head of Influencer (US)





## INSIGHT

# 52%

***agree that representations of masculinity on social media are causing social problems in their community***

***vs 18% that disagree***

There is clearly concern amongst many young men around the impact of social media on wider society, with 52% agreeing that representations of masculinity are causing problems such as toxic masculinity, aggression, mental health problems, unrealistic body image expectations, social exclusion and bullying, and gender inequality, within their community.

Somewhat reassuringly though, 53% of 18-24 year olds and 47% of 25-34 year olds are actively trying to find positive role models on social media.

**SO WHAT DO YOUNG MEN VIEW AS A “POSITIVE”  
ROLE MODEL ON SOCIAL MEDIA?**



## INSIGHT

# Young men identify

**Kindness, empathy,  
compassion and inspiration**

**as most important  
qualities of a positive role  
model on social media**

**followed by being**

**Open about mental health**

When looking at how this age group of men defines 'positive' male role models, our study found that over half of respondents aged 25-34 pointed to "kindness, empathy, compassion, and inspiration" (55%) and "being open about mental health" (50%) as the most important qualities of a positive male role model on social media.

For the majority of those aged 18-24, it's these qualities (52% and 46%, respectively) plus "physically fit/ healthy eating" (46%) and "funny/humorous" (45%) that matter most.

Less than a third selected "wealth/rich/having a successful career" as a quality that necessarily applies to a positive role model on social media, dropping to 24% amongst our UK respondents, and only a fifth identified "having a high number of followers or a big online presence".

**When thinking about male influencers...  
Which, if any, of the following do you think would  
apply to a 'positive role model' on social media?**

		AGE		COUNTRY	
	TOTAL	18-24	25-34	US	UK
<b>Kind/Empathetic/Compassionate/ Inspirational</b>	<b>54%</b>	52%	55%	55%	54%
<b>Open about mental health</b>	<b>48%</b>	46%	50%	48%	49%
<b>Funny/Humorous</b>	<b>46%</b>	45%	46%	48%	44%
<b>Physically fit/Healthy Eating</b>	<b>45%</b>	46%	44%	45%	44%
<b>Happy relationships</b>	<b>41%</b>	39%	42%	43%	39%
<b>Speaks openly about politics and/or charitable/social causes</b>	<b>39%</b>	39%	39%	40%	38%
<b>Wealthy/Rich/Successful career</b>	<b>29%</b>	31%	27%	33%	24%
<b>High number of followers/Big online presence</b>	<b>20%</b>	19%	20%	22%	17%
<b>Other</b>	<b>2%</b>	2%	2%	2%	2%
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>10%</b>	10%	10%	9%	11%

Note that by "influencer" we are referring to "individuals or accounts they follow on social media (not a page representing a business or brand) that they do not know personally. The influencer may have a large or popular online presence and are known for the content they create online, as opposed to being known or famous in another right (i.e. celebrity, sports star, actor, comedian)"

## INSIGHT

*“Over the past few years, conversations around mental health, particularly in men, have thankfully become much more open (although there is still a way to go!). It’s positive to see that being open about mental health is deemed a quality of a positive online role model by almost half of the men we surveyed as I don’t think this would have necessarily been the case when I was a teenager.”*

*These results not only help us to challenge the view that young men are inspired primarily by wealth, success or high follower count, but also help us in our strategies going forward. As a team, we can see that creators and influencers who display these favored qualities - from happy relationships and humor, to physical fitness and empathy - are going to be the most positive and powerful to partner with.”*



**Chris Robinson**  
Senior Paid Media Director

***In the UK, only 24% of young men think being wealthy and having a successful career is important to being a positive role model on social media***

***but for Londoners it’s 34%!***



*“This is a reminder to think about your audience’s geographical demographics, as there may be different priorities depending on where people live! It’s not too surprising to me that young men living in the UK’s capital city would be more inspired by wealth and career, especially as the cost of living is highest here so potentially it’s more necessary if you want to live a certain lifestyle. This should equally be a factor in your brand’s influencer selection and strategy.”*



**Ellie Hooper**  
Head of Client (UK)



## INSIGHT

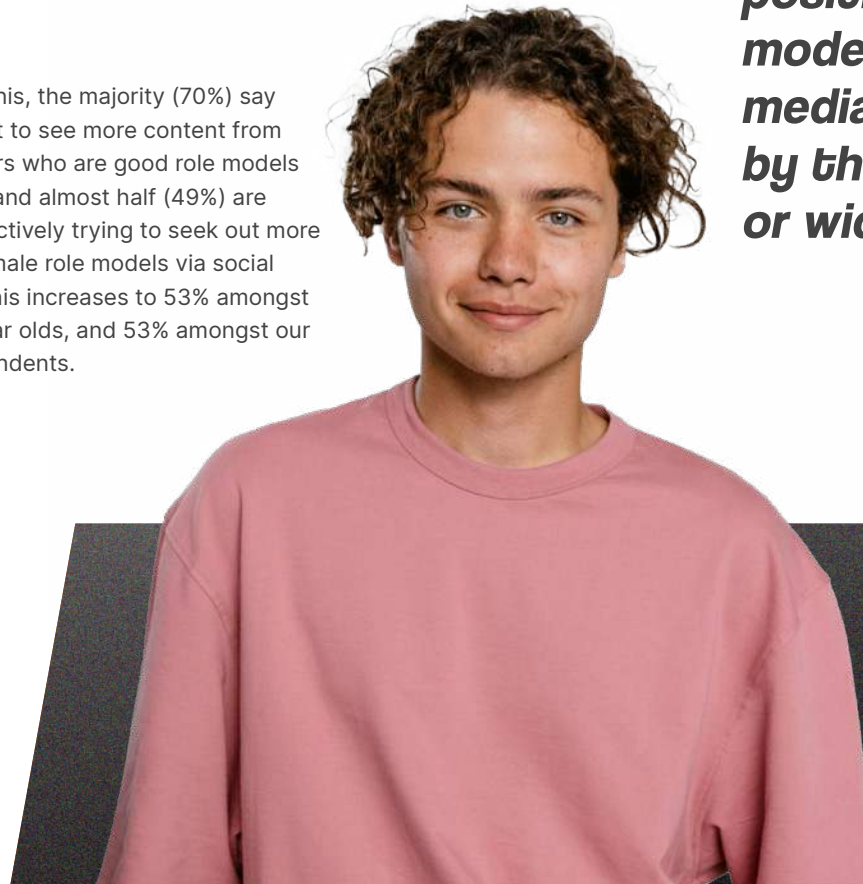
**70%**  
*would like to see more content  
from influencers they feel are  
good role models for men*

The majority of the young men we surveyed believe that the influencers they personally follow are positive role models (70%), however the concern appears to be more around external influencers. Less than half (46%) say that “the content they see on social media - including from influencers they do not follow but appear on their screen or is sent to them - shows good role models or behaviors for men”.

Despite this, the majority (70%) say they want to see more content from influencers who are good role models for men, and almost half (49%) are already actively trying to seek out more positive male role models via social media. This increases to 53% amongst 18-24 year olds, and 53% amongst our US respondents.

+

**67%**  
*believe that many  
positive male role  
models on social  
media are overlooked  
by the press, brands  
or wider society.*





## RECOMMENDATIONS

***Brands and the influencer marketing industry as a whole need to do more to engage young men in a meaningful way, as well as enable them to find more positive role models on social media.***

## SO FOR 2025...



**1.**

### **MAKE THIS A CONSTANT GOING FORWARD**

If you're a brand whose customer base includes young men, consider whether you're really championing positive representation as part of your influencer and wider marketing strategy this year. Speak to your audiences, include creators in the conversation, and make this something you're not afraid to talk about internally (especially with young men in your team!).

**2.**

### **TAKE STOCK OF THE INFLUENCERS YOU PARTNER WITH**

As we've seen from our data, young men place qualities like "Kindness", "Humor", "Happy relationships" and "Openness about mental health" highly when it comes to positive role models. So seek out influencers and creators that really embody these qualities.

**3.**

### **PLACE POSITIVE QUALITIES AT THE HEART OF YOUR CAMPAIGN CREATIVE**

As mentioned in the previous point, it's not just about the influencers, it's also about your entire campaign creative idea. When seeking to engage young men in the US and UK through social and influencer marketing, look at how your campaign reflects the qualities they want to see in positive role models.

**4.**

### **CHAMPION POSITIVE INFLUENCERS**

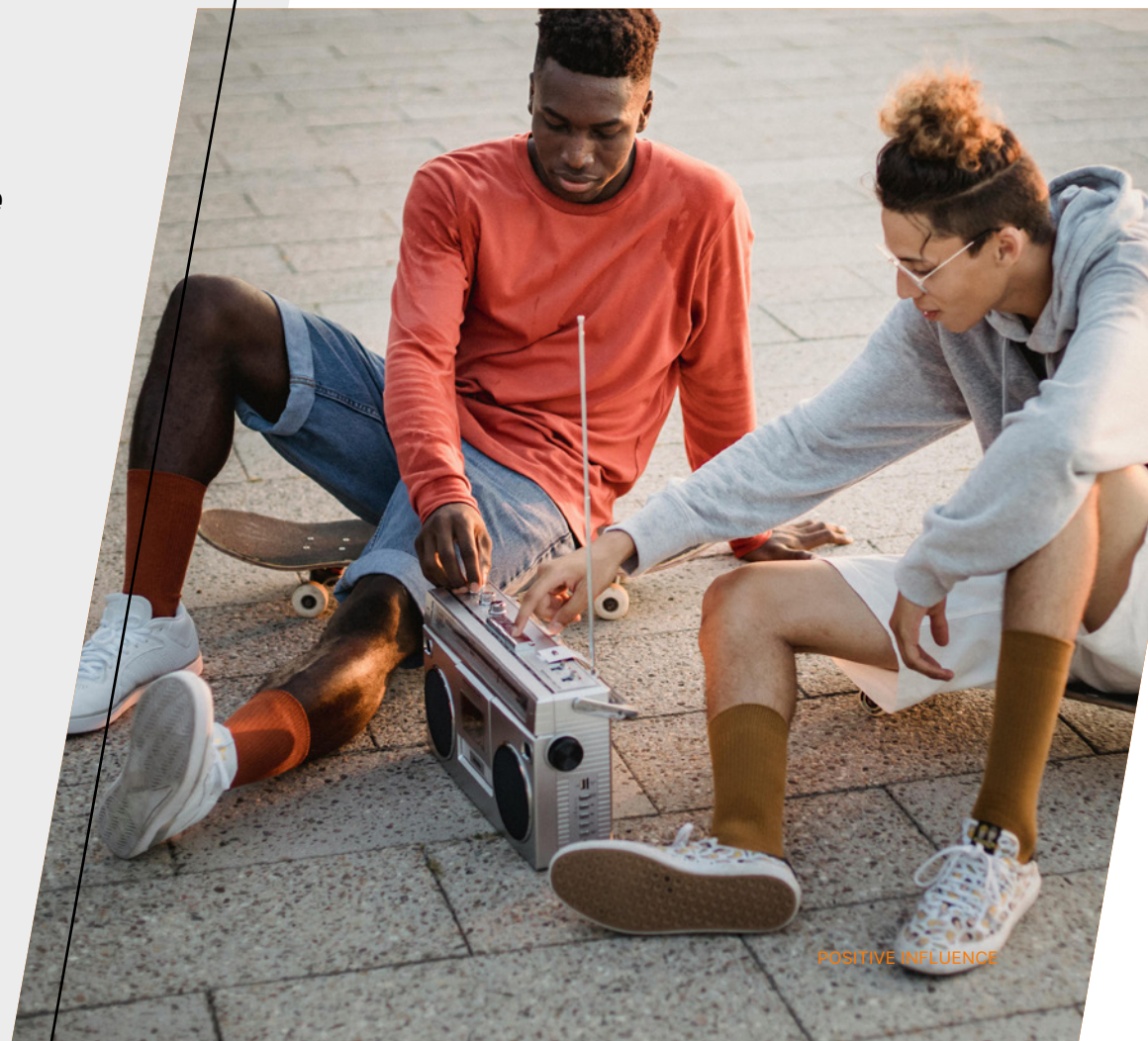
Just by choosing to work with creators that embody the qualities identified by men as exemplifying a "positive role model", we are helping to be part of the solution. The more these types of creators are able to get work, make more content, and reach more people, the more that \*hopefully\* young men's views of the world and men's role in society will change for the better.



***“Perhaps due to sensitivities around “toxic masculinity”, it feels like we are sometimes afraid to have conversations around how we champion men and positive male influencers. But I think this data really shows the importance for all of us in the advertising world to pay attention to how young men feel about how they’re represented, what exactly they’re looking for from representation, and what they think they’re missing. It’s only by having these frank conversations that we’ll be able to overcome issues such as the fact that half of young men are concerned that the representation of men on social media is causing problems in their community. In looking to change this, we’re surely only going to improve things for not just young men, but for many of us in society!”***



**Ajalin Williamson,**  
Senior Strategist (US)





CHAPTER 5

# ***YOUNG MEN ON...*** ***MENTAL*** ***HEALTH***



## INSIGHT

# 70%

**have concerns about the impact of social media on young men's health today**

**compared to only 8% who disagree they have concerns**

What stood out from our survey was the concern over social media's impact on young men's mental health, as well as our respondents' own personal mental health.

Specifically in the UK, 76% of our respondents agreed with the statement that they have concerns about the impact of social media on young men's health today, and 58% worry about the impact on their own personal wellbeing. In comparison, this drops fairly significantly to 65% and 54% respectively amongst our US respondents.

The data appears to be fairly even across age groups, suggesting that both age groups experience the same worries.



**"We know there are concerns across society when it comes to the impact of social media on young people's mental health and wellbeing (this is a reason we wanted to commission this research!). And whilst we work in the social and influencer industry, it doesn't mean we're immune to the negative sides or that we're unwilling to listen/accept that there could be downsides. In fact, I think it's incredibly important that we have these honest conversations and look at how we can address this "70%" number, and even hopefully reduce it in future through responsible influencer advertising."**



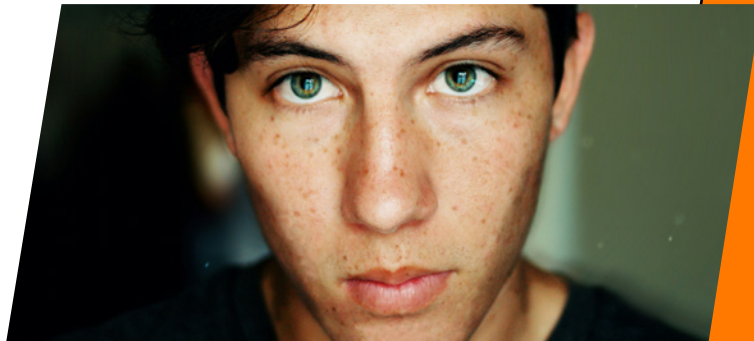
**Sam Fowler**  
Account Director (UK)



## INSIGHT

**Half of young men believe that the depictions of men in social media advertising feel unattainable or unrealistic in terms of fitness, beauty or wealth compared to 16% that disagree**

We wanted to explore *why* so many young men have concerns about social media's effect on mental health. As mentioned in the intro of this report, it feels like a lot of the conversations around things like body positivity, self-image, confidence in appearance, etc. tend to center around young women and girls. In fact, our data shows that over half of the men we surveyed are also struggling with the unattainable or unrelatable content they're faced with on the platforms, especially when it comes to fitness, beauty and wealth. Only 4% of the men we surveyed "strongly disagreed" with the statement that "depictions of men in social media advertising feel unattainable or unrealistic in terms of fitness, beauty or wealth".



**19%**  
**say they feel “desensitized” to offensive or derogatory content or comments towards women, men, or other groups of people**

**Whilst 27% ignore it because it is “not real” or “doesn’t directly impact” them**

**Another factor in why some young men have concerns around social media's impact on mental health could be the exposure to unsavory or "distasteful" content.**

Categorizing "distasteful" content as "offensive or derogatory content or comments towards women, men, or other groups of people", we were surprised to find that so many young men are all too aware and exposed to this, but that they feel somewhat powerless to change it.

31% of those we surveyed say this content makes them "feel upset/angry/sad" but that they "tend to scroll past and ignore it", whilst a fifth say they feel "desensitized" or like "there is nothing they can do to help or change it".

7% claim to not feel anything towards this type of content, whilst 1 in 3 say it makes them want to block certain people. Only 13% say they will comment under content they disagree with.

**"It's interesting that over a quarter of the young men we surveyed say that they ignore distasteful, offensive or derogatory content because it is "not real" or "doesn't directly impact" them. Across all the answers, it feels like many young men are mainly trying to stay away from this type of content, opting instead to scroll past or block accounts instead of engaging with it. On the one hand, I think this can be seen as a positive thing as they are prioritizing their own mental wellbeing by not participating, AND they aren't generating further engagement for it. But on the negative side, for me, I worry that many young people just accept this type of content as a natural part of being online or don't even see it as "real" (though it very much is!)."**



**Gregg Tobin**

Senior Account Director (US)



## INSIGHT

# 24%

**of young men have changed the social media platform they primarily use to better their experience of social media**

**Whilst 38% have followed more positive role models/influencers**



**Which, if any, of the following have you done in response to bettering your experience of social media**

		COUNTRY	
	TOTAL	US	UK
Unfollowed people/influencers that were having a negative impact on my experience of social media	42%	45%	39%
Unfollowed people/influencers that were having a negative impact on my mental health	40%	43%	36%
Followed more positive role models/influencers	38%	46%	30%
Stopped using social media as much as I used to	29%	27%	31%
Speaking more to my friends and family about the impact of social media on my life and/or my mental health	25%	28%	21%
Changed the social media platform that I primarily use	24%	24%	24%
Imposed time limits on my usage of social media via tools on my phone	15%	17%	13%
Imposed time limits on my usage of social media that I try to hold myself to without the help of tools from my phone	13%	14%	11%
Stopped using social media altogether	11%	11%	12%
Sought external and professional help in response to my experience on social media	11%	13%	10%
Don't know	4%	4%	4%
None of these	12%	9%	15%

## INSIGHT

**A quarter have spoken to friends and family about the impact of social media on their lives or mental health**

**Whilst 11% have sought external or professional help**

"It's encouraging to see people are taking action with their social media usage to protect or improve their mental health. Taking the time to properly curate your content feeds is crucial in a world where algorithms dominate user experience. It's no surprise to see that nearly half of the young men we surveyed in the US are proactively unfollowing certain creators to improve their time spent on social media. With a quarter of respondents saying they've changed platforms to improve their experience, it's possible we'll see this trend impacting platform popularity and usage in 2025 and beyond."



**Sam Anderson,**  
Head of People



# 20%

**of young men trust the influencers they follow for tips on managing mental health**

A relatively high proportion of the young men we surveyed trust the influencers they follow for tips on mental health, and this is particularly the case in the US where the same percentage (23%) trust them equally to Charities/ Helplines, and only slightly more (26%) trust their doctor. In comparison, the UK

respondents are still much more likely to trust their Doctor (50% vs 17%).

Across the board, the majority of young men trust their Family (62%) and Friends (53%) the most when it comes to tips for managing mental health.





***“We need to be conscious that many social media influencers won’t necessarily have training or certification in the areas they create content around. In particular, we should be mindful of this when it comes to health - both physical and mental - and it’s important that young men who are struggling with their mental health seek out the appropriate medical channels.***

***However, I do think it’s a positive thing that there are more open conversations being had online and on social media, which is where young people spend so much of their time. We see many influencers and creators discussing mental health wellbeing and sharing tips for how they personally manage it, and as long as this is monitored appropriately, it can be a really helpful outlet for someone who might need additional support or encouragement.”***



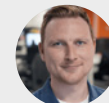
**Shakira Beach**  
People Director

# 64%

***believe that social media can become a better place/safe space for young men***

***And two thirds believe that influencers and brands can have an impact in helping to create this.***

***“What really stands out to me from this research is that young men are highly aware of the impact that negative content or untruthful social media can have on their own mental health, and the wellbeing of society in general. But there is clearly a strong appetite for more positive role models on social media; men that exude qualities such as empathy, compassion, and who have healthy and happy relationships. As advertisers, we have a responsibility to nurture this and help to create a safer space for young men online. Two thirds of those we surveyed agreed that brands and influencers can help to foster this, and it’s something we all need to speak more about in the planning stages of a social media/influencer campaign strategy.”***



**Nick Cooke,**  
Co-Founder and Chief Client Officer



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *So how can brands and agencies help to improve men's experiences on social media, contributing to better mental health and wellbeing?*

As an industry, we need to prioritise:

#### **1. PROMOTING RELATABLE AND REALISTIC DEPICTIONS OF MEN.**

As we saw in the data, a significant proportion of the young men we surveyed feel that depictions of men on social media are unattainable. We often have this conversation around the depiction of women and girls, but are we talking about it enough when it comes to men? When planning your campaign, ensure you're reviewing the influencers you're partnering with across the board and consider whether they reflect a realistic view of men.

#### **2. BALANCE ASPIRATION WITH ATTAINABILITY.**

As advertisers, our goal is always to create a certain "prestige" around our brand and products. We want people to feel that it's a brand they feel proud to buy from to a certain extent. When engaging young men, there's still sometimes a view that they all want to see this super aspirational messaging and ambassadors, but in fact, our data suggests they still want to feel this is attainable. Look at how your influencer campaigns can encourage young men to be the best versions of themselves, rather than make them feel less than.

**3.**

#### **MONITOR PLATFORM USAGE.**

As we discovered, nearly a quarter of the young men we surveyed are swapping out the social media platform they use most regularly to improve their mental health/experience online. Take stock of the platforms your brand currently uses influencer marketing on, and speak to your customers, and determine whether there needs to be a shift in budgets!

**4.**

#### **YOUNG MEN WANT TO SEE MORE VULNERABILITY FROM INFLUENCERS.**

From openness around mental health, to showing kindness and empathy, it seems that many men do want to see vulnerability from the influencers they follow. This not only helps them to feel more relatable, but it resonates as a positive quality. The more we trust and relate to influencers, the more likely we will be to take their recommendations!

**5.**

#### **PRIORITIZE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.**

As with all marketing, ensure you're representing your customers in an inclusive way. Again this may be one of those things that some are used to discussing more when it comes to women, especially around body positivity, but don't forget to consider this with your campaigns aimed at men as well. And remember that inclusion isn't specific to one thing such as ethnicity or body type; ensure you're partnering with a diverse range of creators and influencers, and allow them to bring their unique experiences into their content!



# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS



**Thank you for taking the time to read our research report, where we've examined the state of male influence and the role that social media and influencers play in young men's lives. We're excited to share the findings and our coinciding recommendations with you.**

**As we approach the second half of the decade, we hope to see more examples of positive male role models and influencers coming to the forefront, and for brands to prioritize creating a better, safer space for young people online.**

## **METHODOLOGY**

In October 2024, YouGov was commissioned by The Goat Agency and Propeller Group to deliver a survey into 4,000 men aged 18-35. All figures detailed in this report, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 4032 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 23rd - 31st October 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK and US adults (aged 18+).

## **NOTES**

The data for this report has been taken from our study with YouGov, however all additional insights, takeouts and recommendations have been written by The Goat Agency and do not necessarily represent the views of YouGov.



# ABOUT THE GOAT AGENCY

**Goat is a global, award-winning social and influencer marketing agency.**

Since 2015, we have been at the forefront of the social media and influencer marketing industry, winning Fastest Growing Agency in Europe in 2019, and being shortlisted for Campaign's Global Social Media Agency of the Year in 2023 and 2024. Our experts have worked with hundreds of brands to drive awareness, engagement, conversions and brand love through long term creator-led strategies and best-in-class influencer campaigns.

We've worked with leading global brands such as **Alibaba, Dell, Heineken, Henkel, John Deere, L'Oreal, Mars Wrigley, NIVEA, Tesco**, and **Unilever**, helping them to build relevance amongst new audiences and scale their influencer marketing capabilities.

In 2023, we were acquired by WPP to become part of GroupM. Today, Goat represents more than 450 employees worldwide working across 35 local markets.

## Get in touch

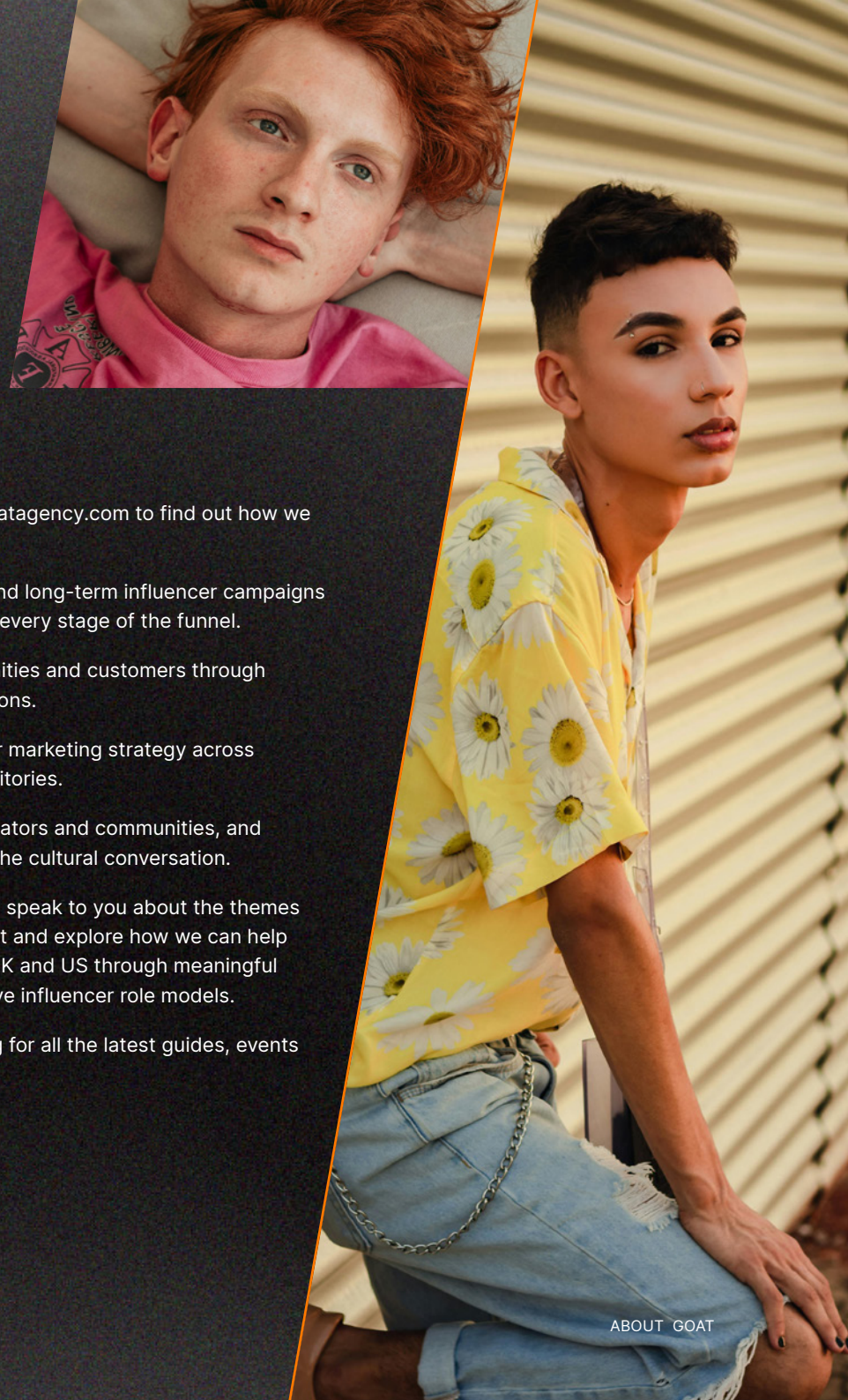
Get in touch with us at [www.goatagency.com](http://www.goatagency.com) to find out how we could help you:

- Build a strategy for short and long-term influencer campaigns that delivers results at any/every stage of the funnel.
- Connect with new communities and customers through tactical creator-led activations.
- Consolidate your influencer marketing strategy across different platforms and territories.
- Activate around trends, creators and communities, and ultimately become part of the cultural conversation.

We are also more than happy to speak to you about the themes or insights detailed in this report and explore how we can help you engage young men in the UK and US through meaningful influencer strategies and positive influencer role models.

You can also check out our Blog for all the latest guides, events and insights from our team.

GOAT BLOG





# goat

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