

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office

2020 UN Women Asia-Pacific WEPs Awards Regional Awardee Profile



Winner

## Unilever Thai Trading Limited

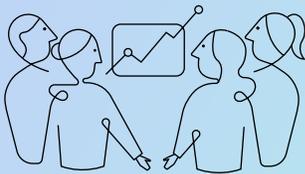


Rob Candelino  
CEO

### Unilever Thailand

Country: Thailand  
Employees: 1001 - 5000  
Industry: Fast Moving Consumer Goods

Website  
<https://www.unilever.co.th/>



### Leveraging Brand Power

Unilever Thailand aims to challenge gender norms and stereotypes in Thailand and beyond. Through Sunsilk, one of Unilever's major hair care brands, Unilever aims to open up possibilities for women everywhere, giving them the freedom to embrace their true selves. In Thailand, Unilever recognized the importance of styling hair as a form of self-expression for particularly for transgenders. For instance, growing long hair is often the first step for transgender women to express their femininity.

To take action, Unilever harnessed their marketing strategies for social good – to create a campaign that would bring awareness to and celebrate the stories of transgender women and their journeys towards expressing their true selves when odds are against them. Despite the prevalence of transgender women in Thailand, they still face discrimination at the personal and legal level. Unilever recognized that a lack of representation in media, including advertising, partly feeds the stigmas associated with transgender women. Even more rare are advertisements that go beyond sheer tokenism, to actually empower transgender women and their narratives.

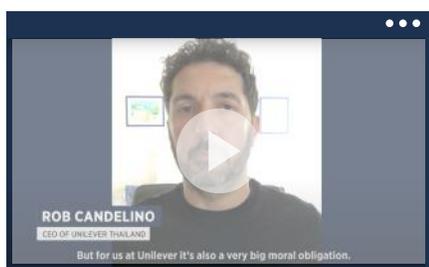
“

*Empowering women throughout their value chain is a crucial part of Unilever D&I ambitions. Unilever Thailand is determined to make their business a leading force in closing the gender gap, transforming individual lives and society.*

”



By launching Sunsilk's 'Hair Talk' video campaign, Unilever shared the story of Rock Kwanlada, a young transgender woman and first runner-up for the 2017 Miss Tiffany Universe competition. The campaign shed light on Rock's courage told from the point of view of her hair, discussing the reality of challenges including family acceptance and gender norms related to beauty



### Taking a Risk for Social Change

To prioritize Rock's narrative and share her genuine voice, Unilever Thailand was challenged to experiment with various strategies to effectively advertise Sunsilk. Unilever Thailand eventually decided to showcase Sunsilk subtly in one scene, highlighting Rock's narrative to inspire a greater understanding of transgender women, and opting for societal good rather than financial gain.

Knowing that their consumers preferred easily digestible advertisements with simpler messages from well-known celebrities, Unilever Thailand took a risk with Sunsilk's 'Hair Talk', anticipating consumer reactions after viewing Rock's heartfelt story. This has been an invaluable commercial ad for Unilever where the sentimental value is priceless; Rock's and other transgender women's voices deserved to be heard, as loud as possible.

*Watch the testimonial video to learn more!*

Due to societal norms, publicly discussing transgender empowerment and featuring a transgender woman in Unilever Thailand's campaign was seen as a great risk. While Thailand is more accepting of transgender rights compared to other countries, there still remains discrimination and stigma associated with transgender identities. The success of the 'Hair Talk' campaign has inspired Unilever to continue advocating for transgender empowerment to this day.

### Changing Perceptions

Success was defined primarily by how 'Hair Talk' shared Unilever Thailand's purpose and promoted engagement in and conversations about both the empowerment of transgender women by leveraging Sunsilk as a brand.

Consumer engagement with the 'Hair Talk' campaign was staggering. On social media, 'Hair Talk' received 2.5 million organic views within 48 hours of its launch. Within 2 months, it had sparked a nationwide conversation around gender and stereotypes, gathering over 37 million views in Thailand alone. 'Hair Talk' has surpassed a record 65 million views online, with brand conviction, sales, and penetration KPIs achieving record numbers. Additionally, in 2019 the film won Bronze Lion Award for Creative Effectiveness at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity and in 2018 Bronze award at the Cannes Lion Film.

'Hair Talk' received positive engagement from viewers who identifying as transgender - both transgender men and women, who described how 'Hair Talk' gave them the confidence to come out to their friends and family, to express their real selves, and/or to feel understood.



'Hair Talk' also received comments from people struggling to gain acceptance for their transgender identity by hearing Rock's powerful story, sharing how empowering it was to know that they were not alone.

As the measure of real success, Unilever Thailand is proud to have been the first big beauty and personal care brand in Thailand to start a conversation about challenging gender norms by inspiring others to increase their representation of transgender identities in their content and to start thinking about how their products can serve transgender people. As 'Hair Talk' continues to be talked about with other companies follow in Sunsilk's footsteps, the campaign demonstrates the powerful role brands can play in leading the Thai marketplace to become more gender-inclusive.

“

*We believe that brands have the responsibility to be a force for good in the world. As the market-leading brand in hair care that can help people feel more accepted, more comfortable in themselves, we felt it was an obligation for us to tell this story.*

- Rob Candelino

”

## Women's Empowerment Principles



High-Level Corporate Leadership



Treat all Women and Men Fairly at Work without Discrimination



Employee Health, Well-Being and Safety



Education and Training for Career Advancement



Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices



Community Initiatives and Advocacy



Measurement and Reporting

 [asiapacificwepsawards.org](http://asiapacificwepsawards.org)

   [@unwomenasia](https://www.instagram.com/unwomenasia)  [linkedin.com/showcase/wepprinciples/](https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/wepprinciples/)

#WeEmpowerAsia #WEPsAwards

Funded by:



Produced by:



In support of:

**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES**  
Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office