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September 12, 2013

Cori Schumacher & Krista Comer

# Does Sex Sell?

Recent studies suggest that not only does sex *not* sell product or increase attendance at sports events, but it can be detrimental to how the athletic ability of athletes is perceived.

# SEX SELLS? TREND MAY BE CHANGING

By | Aug 27, 2013  
espnW

*Sex sells.*

Most of us have heard this phrase so many times, we no longer question its veracity, especially when it comes to sports. As the popular thinking goes, if a female athlete wants to succeed in the endorsement game, she should be willing to trade on her body and her looks first, her athletic talent second.

Just take a glance in the rearview mirror. Over the past 15 years, some of the female athletes who have won biggest in the race for sponsors are Danica Patrick, Maria Sharapova and Anna Kournikova.

In the Nine for IX film "Branded," premiering Tuesday on ESPN (8 p.m. ET), filmmakers Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady tackle the age-old question in women's sports: Will sex appeal always supersede achievement?

But before we try to answer that, we need to ask ourselves a few more: Does sex really sell now? How do we know for sure? What if I told you it doesn't?

What if I told you there is research to the contrary? As in, research showing that consumers, when deciding whether to buy a sports-related product, respond more to advertisements that portray female athletes as -- get this -- athletes.

Because that's exactly what grassroots studies have shown, according to Janet Fink, an associate professor in the department of sports management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. "Another thing we

## Nine for IX: Branded



We look at the marketing of female athletes leading into the premiere of the Nine for IX film "Branded," which premieres Aug. 27 on ESPN (8 p.m. ET):

- **Watch:**
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are finding, and this makes sense, is that each time a female athlete is pictured in a sexualized way, it diminishes the perception of her athletic ability," said Fink, who specializes in sports consumer behavior, as well as media and marketing depictions of female athletes.

- The Vault:

- 'Branded':

- Nine for IX:

- Buy:

This perception is true for men, too: When you see a sexualized picture of a male athlete, say David Beckham modeling underwear or Tom Brady wearing Uggs, your subconscious tends to put a little black mark next to his athletic endeavors. Doubt creeps in where none might have existed before, and you begin to question Beckham's soccer skills or Brady's superiority as a quarterback.

Even though this kind of marketing can undercut both genders, the real damage has been done on the women's side, because nearly all of our popular, mainstream representations of female athletes play up their off-the-field appeal, with performance taking a backseat.

In light of the research conducted by Fink and other academics in recent years, just think of the negative effects these marketing images have had on how we, as a society, view women's sports. It goes a long way toward explaining why a highly successful female athlete can often feel like Sisyphus, pushing the rock up the hill only to watch it roll back down -- because the sports world is still mostly operating as if bikinis on soccer players and slinky dresses on tennis stars are where the money is.

Changes are coming, though, and some are already upon us, providing a glimpse of how female athletes might be marketed in the future, when we will likely see a wider range of women as endorsers, rather than just a select handful (those traditionally deemed the sexiest and prettiest, within narrow parameters).

Consider WNBA rookie Brittney Griner. In rejecting the age-old marketing model for female athletes -- to begin with, she is the first openly gay athlete to sign with Nike -- she has made it clear she wants her brand to represent her authentic self, not an ideal that Madison Avenue has created. While Griner and Nike are still determining the exact approach they'll take, both sides have said they want to ".

Likewise, young girls who are just starting out in sports will take note when they see a fierce competitor like soccer star Abby Wambach pitching Gatorade with a take-no-prisoners attitude on the field. Tough. Sweaty. Strong.



"If girls see more images of female athletes as athletes, then it shifts their thinking," said Nicole Lavoie, a professor at the University of Minnesota and the associate director of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sports. "That's the game-changer. It opens up the idea that we can see and celebrate all female athletes."

Usually a company wants to work with a male athlete if he can check at least one of the following boxes: seems trustworthy, possesses expertise, looks attractive. The more boxes, the higher his worth. But with women, there is typically only one box that marketers care about. "What we seem to do with female athletes is focus on their attractiveness," Fink said. "It's the only thing we sell about them. So if you look at female endorsers, sometimes they are not even the best in their sport."

And then the rock rolls all the way back downhill and we start again.

"The blame isn't on the athlete," Fink continued. "They're playing the only game that exists. I think soon the marketing executives and mainstream media need to realize how the next generation wants to see its female athletes. And that's simply as athletes."

The irony, as both Fink and Lavoie point out, is that some female athletes, and entire leagues, are still glamming themselves up in the name of mainstream appeal, even though several studies have shown (for male and female athletes) there is no correlation between seeing a sexy image and then actually turning on the game to watch the player whose sexy image you have seen.

"Actually, what helps, believe it or not, is to show their true athletic ability," Fink said.

Talent sells.

That might not sound as sexy, but for the next generation of female athletes, it could prove more rewarding.

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Columnist, espnW.com

## Sex DOES NOT Sell Women's Sport

This focus on the “heterosexy” aspects of the female athlete may serve to reinforce hegemonic masculinity, but it does nothing to sell women's sport. In fact, there is a growing stream of empirical evidence that this taken for granted notion that “sex sells” women's sport just not true (Cunningham, Fink, & Kenix, 2008; Fink, et al, 2004; Kane & Maxwell, 2011). This recent research suggests the opposite is true: focusing on the athletic accomplishments of female athletes and women's teams is more effective than highlighting the athletes' attractiveness or sexiness.

For example, Fink et al. (2004) used associative learning theory and the match-up hypothesis to test the effectiveness of two different strategies (a focus on appearance versus a focus on athletic excellence) for selling a women's sporting event. The match-up hypothesis is used widely in the endorser effectiveness literature and suggests that an endorser will be much more effective when there is a natural fit in the consumer's mind between the endorser and the endorsed product. As such, Danica Patrick should be a more effective endorser of motor oil than a product unrelated to her sport. Given this background, Fink et al (2004) hypothesized that when advertising a female sports event (in this case a college softball game), an athlete's expertise should be more important than her attractiveness in terms of effectively persuading people to attend. An experimental design was used to manipulate a fictitious female athlete's attractiveness and expertise. In the “expertise” condition, the advertisement included phrases highlighting the athlete's skill (e.g., Voted NCAA player of the year), whereas in the “less skilled” condition, these phrases were not included. The attractive athlete had long blonde hair, some make-up, and a slender face, while the less attractive athlete had short brown hair, a fuller face, and no make-up. The results of the experiment revealed the female athlete's expertise, not her attractiveness, was the more important factor in athlete-event fit, and, subsequently, participants' intentions to attend the event.

Cunningham et al. (2008) replicated the aforementioned study and advertised an intercollegiate tennis event, as it was anticipated that a more “sex appropriate” or “feminine” sport like tennis could, perhaps, elicit different responses. The results again showed expertise was the most important factor in enticing people to attend the event; however, there was an interaction effect – when the endorser was manipulated to have lower levels of expertise, the attractive athlete was perceived to be the more effective endorser. Still, both of these studies provided initial evidence that an athlete's expertise or skill should be the focus of marketing



efforts for women's sports events.

A recent study by Kane and Maxwell (2011) provides further evidence that sex does not sell women's sport. In a mixed methods study, they conducted focus groups and obtained survey data with consumers of all different age groups. They presented the consumer groups with various media depictions of female athletes from athletic competence, to soft pornography. The athletic competence photo was given the highest rating across all groups. In contrast, the more sexualized the photo, the more it alienated all females and older males. Further, while young men found those photos interesting, such photos did not entice them to attend or watch women's sports or increase their respect for women's sports.

### The Negative Effects of Current Marketing and Media Practices

Even worse, studies have shown that focusing on an athlete's attractiveness or sex appeal can actually have deleterious effects for the athlete in the eyes of the consumer. Knight and Guiliano (2002) conducted an experimental study in which they developed fictitious newspaper articles manipulating the sport story's main focus (the athlete's athleticism versus her or his attractiveness). The results indicated participants provided significantly lower ratings of both the female and male athlete when the story's focus was the athlete's attractiveness. Similarly, Fink (2008) conducted an experimental study using actual athletes, Maria Sharapova and Andy Roddick, in which the athletes were depicted in "sexy" or "athletic action" photographs as part of an advertisement for a tennis charity event and measured participants' perceptions of the athletes on several outcome measures. Interestingly, participants exposed to the "sexy" advertisement rated both Sharapova and Roddick lower on measures of expertise and respect for their athletic accomplishments. Further, similar to the studies described previously, participants exposed to these advertisements were also least influenced to attend the event. So, not only is there mounting evidence that sex does not sell women's (or men's) sport effectively, but there is growing evidence that such marketing campaigns and media depictions negatively impact consumers' attitudes about the athletes, especially in terms of respect and athletic expertise.

Keep in mind that the participants in these studies were exposed to the experimental manipulation for only a very short period of time, long enough for participants to read an article or view an advertisement. Even with such a brief exposure, participants' attitudes towards the athletes' athletic accomplishments significantly decreased when the focus was on appearance, or when the athlete was shown in a sexy pose. This was true for both the female and male athlete. However,



research over the past 20 years provides enormous evidence that female athletes, compared to males, are depicted in ways that highlight their attractiveness and/or sexiness (e.g., Creedon, 1998; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Grau, Roselli & Taylor, 2007; Kane, 1988). The combination of these facts suggests the longitudinal exposure to typical media and marketing portrayals has tremendously damaging effects for attitudes toward female athletes and women's sport.

### Keeping Up With the Times?

Recent studies on athlete endorsers also indicate that current marketing practices may not be keeping up with younger consumers' tastes. As stated earlier, the female athlete most likely to receive an endorsement deal typically plays a more "female appropriate" sport (e.g., golf, tennis, figure skating). Fink, Parker, Cunningham, and Cuneen (2012) conducted an experimental study with college students and manipulated the type of sport in which the female athlete endorser participated: boxing versus tennis. It was anticipated the female boxer would receive lower ratings on measures of endorser effectiveness given that she participated in a very masculine sport. And, while the female boxer received slightly lower ratings on attractiveness (even though the same person was used in each advertisement), ratings of trustworthiness and expertise were the same. Further, sport type had no influence on participants' perceptions of endorser-product fit, nor intentions to purchase the product. Thus, the female boxer was just as effective as the female tennis player, providing evidence that female athletes participating in more typically masculine sports can also be effective endorsers with young consumers.

The female athlete used in the Fink et al. (2012) advertisement was visibly feminine, so Fink, Parker, and Mudrick (2012) conducted a study to determine whether the female athlete's gender expression (masculine versus feminine) impacted participants' (college students) perceptions of effectiveness. Fictitious advertisements were designed in which the "script" of the advertisement was the same, but the appearance of the athlete was manipulated via Photoshop to be either feminine or masculine (e.g., shorter hair, baggier clothes, black clothes versus pink clothes, barbed wire tattoo around bicep, and so on). While the results indicated that participants rated the "masculine" female endorser significantly less attractive, it had no impact on their perceptions of athlete expertise. Additionally, gender expression did not impact participants' intentions to buy the endorsed products. Thus, while participants rated the more masculine endorser less attractive, the masculinity or femininity of the endorser had no impact on participants' purchase intentions.



Further, Parker and Fink (2012) conducted a study to determine whether an endorser's sexual orientation impacted her or his effectiveness. They manipulated the athlete endorser's sexual orientation in a fictitious biographical sketch written about a fictitious US Olympic athlete. All other biographical and athletic information about the athlete in the sketch remained the same. Results showed the athletes' sexual orientation had no impact on participants' perceptions of her (or his) effectiveness as an endorser. A poll conducted in 2005 indicated that 64% of respondents thought it would be unlikely that brands would choose an openly gay athlete as an endorser and 68% thought being "out" would hurt the athlete's career (Buzinski, 2005). Such assumptions may still be true today, but the results of the Fink and Parker (2012) study suggests that gay athletes can be just as effective as straight athletes in endorsements.

### Concluding Comments

Forty years after the anniversary of Title IX, with women's participation in sport at an all-time high, media and marketing executives continue to hypersexualize, and hyperfeminize women's sport and female athletes. However, as you can see from the information presented, sex does not sell women's sport. Quite the contrary, in fact; the hypersexualization of female athletes serves to (further) erode the public's respect for their athletic abilities. And yet, recent research indicates that younger consumers care about a female athlete's skill, not the sport she plays, her femininity, or her sexual orientation.

What attracts people to women's sport is the same thing that attracts people to men's sport – amazing athletic ability and riveting contests. The 2011 Women's World Cup was not the most watched soccer telecast ever on ESPN and the second most watched daytime telecast in cable history (Novy-Williams, 2011) because the athletes were pretty, sexy, or heterosexual. It achieved those milestones because it was an amazing game, with exceptional athletes, making unbelievably athletic plays. Obviously there are still many people threatened by someone like Baylor basketball star Brittany Griner with her 7' 4" wingspan, size 17 shoe ([www.baylorbears.com](http://www.baylorbears.com)) and androgynous look. However, as a result of the advocacy work and research conducted by the folks who have contributed to this book, and others, such views are slowly changing. GLBT advocates, Cyd Zeigler, Helen Carroll, and Pat Griffin (2012) commented: "2011 was a watershed year in the fight to end homophobia and transphobia in sports. We have finally reached a tipping point when anti-gay slurs, silence and discrimination are no longer the accepted norms in sports" (§ 2).

One might think this would lead to market forces dictating a change in how media and marketing executives present women's sport and female athletes, but the emphasis on female athletes' femininity and heterosexuality is so insidious that even many female athletes themselves buy into this notion. Griffin calls it the "Freedom to be Feminine Movement" (as quoted in Sartore-Baldwin, 2012, p. 145). And yet recent research indicates that, presently, and perhaps more than ever, consumers possess more enlightened ideals regarding female athletes. This suggests the time is right for a real change in the way we market women's sport. Unfortunately, homophobia amongst media and marketing executives, league executives, athletic administrators, and perhaps even some female athletes themselves, inhibits the orchestration of such change. Thus, it will take significant effort to convince these stakeholders to transform their tactics. Still, with continued research and advocacy work, and given the substantial progress made thus far, I am quite hopeful they can be convinced such change is warranted.

(excerpted from Fink, JS, *Homophobia and the Marketing of Female Athlete and Women's Sport*, 2012)

This essay, found in "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport: Essays from Activists, Coaches, and Scholars," is freely available in its entirety at the following website:  
[www.diversityinsport.com](http://www.diversityinsport.com)



## Women in sport

# Game, sex and match

**Sportswomen are beginning to score more commercial goals—but they still have a lot of ground to make up**

Sep 7th 2013 | From the print edition

MARIA SHARAPOVA'S shoulder injury stopped her playing in the US Open tennis tournament in New York this month. Not that she needs the prize money. The highest-paid female athlete in the world, she has earned \$29m this year. Women golfers and figure skaters do well too. But others don't. While sport has gained huge clout and wealth (the global industry is now worth up to \$620 billion, according to a study by



A.T. Kearney, a consultancy) and women's participation has risen sharply, men still fare far better.

The number of girls participating in American high-school athletics, for example, has jumped to 3.2m from 300,000 in 1972, when a clause in an education bill called Title IX enshrined equal opportunities for students of both sexes, including in sports. The Tucker Centre at the University of Minnesota, which studies women in sport, says 40% of American athletic participants are female. But they receive less than 5% of all media coverage (and only 1.62% of sporting airtime on big networks). In 2004-2009 they comprised just 3.6% of the covers of ESPN *The Magazine*, a journal produced by a big sports media outlet.

Belatedly, this is beginning to change: women are breaking through in sports where physical strength and speed matter less or not at all. Even in muscular games such as football and rugby (pictured above), they are seeing slivers of the action, the glory—and the financial rewards.

In February a lap taken at 196mph gained Danica Patrick a pole position in part of the NASCAR Sprint Cup series—the first woman to do so, in a sport dominated by men. She won \$6m last year plus \$9m in sponsorship deals; ESPN *The Magazine* put her on its cover. That highlights a big advantage for women: once they gain initial recognition, glamour can kick in. Ms Patrick has appeared in a record 12 ads in the past seven years for the Super Bowl, American football's championship game.



At the international level, women have never done better. London 2012 was the first Olympic games with at least nominal female participation from every country, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Brunei. America's investment in its women athletes paid off: they won more medals than their male teammates. Viewers paid attention. South Africa's most-watched event was a women's football match against Sweden, and a peak British audience of 3.9m tuned in to watch the national women's football team beat Brazil.

Such success helps bring better media coverage, and all the benefits that come in its wake. In August BT Sport, a British television channel, started showing big matches from the Football Association's Women's Super League, launched in 2011. Women's football is the fourth-largest team sport in England, measured by participation (after men's football, rugby and cricket). The country's female cricketers recently beat Australia in the women's Ashes, and three of the shorter matches in the series were shown live on Sky Sports, Britain's main satellite channel.

These changes are altering the culture of sport. Old-fashioned attitudes are beginning to look indefensible. Sir Stirling Moss, a Formula One champion, once doubted whether women had the "mental aptitude" for motor racing. Sepp Blatter, president of FIFA, the governing body of world football, expressed a wish in 2004 for female players to compete in "more feminine garb", suggesting that they wear "tighter shorts".

Glamour and sizzle do help sportswomen build their brand. This can be strikingly unfair. Marion Bartoli won the women's tennis championship at Wimbledon amid scalding criticism of her looks. Ms Patrick, the NASCAR star, has turned down offers to pose naked. Such pressure annoys those who think sportswomen should be famed for their prowess, not their sex appeal. It may backfire too. Research conducted by Mary Jo Kane, a sport sociologist, and colleagues, suggests that sexualised images of female athletes turn off women and older men and so "alienate a core fan base". Males aged 18-34 liked them, but for other reasons. (see next article)

### Cashing in

Respect for women's sport is not just politically correct. Administrators and media bosses are also spotting a commercial opportunity with male fans. More men than women watch female football matches; 55% of American men in a survey last month said they preferred watching women's tennis to men's.

America's main sports network, ESPN, has agreed to extend coverage of professional women's basketball until 2022. That is good for sponsors: Coca-Cola, American Express, and adidas are just some of the partners of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). Some female teams are reaping benefits too—though the men's game still subsidises the league.



# Sex Sells Sex, Not Women's Sports

So what does sell women's sports?

**Mary Jo Kane** July 27, 2011 | This article appeared in the August 15-22, 2011 edition of *The Nation*.

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*"The newest kid on the women's sports block is finding that the old formula for attention-getting is as robust as ever. 'Sex sells,' says Atlanta Beat defender Nancy Augustyniak, who was astonished to learn she finished third in a Playboy.com poll of the sexiest female soccer players." —Wendy Parker, Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

Last winter, champion alpine skier Lindsey Vonn won the downhill gold medal at the Vancouver Winter Olympics, the first American woman to achieve gold in this prestigious event. From 2008 to 2010, Vonn also won three consecutive World Cup championships, the first US woman and second woman ever to accomplish such a feat. For her unprecedented achievements, Vonn was named Sportswoman of the Year by the US Olympic Committee.

Media

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Slide Show: 6 Ways the Media Represents Female Athletes

About the Author

**Mary Jo Kane**

Mary Jo Kane is the director of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport at the University of...

Even *Sports Illustrated* —notorious for its lack of coverage of women's sports—couldn't ignore this historic moment and devoted its cover to Vonn. *SI*'s cover, however, blatantly portrayed Vonn as a sex object and spoke volumes about the rampant sexual depictions of women athletes. Rather than emphasize her singular athletic talent, the magazine depicted Vonn in a posed photograph, smiling at the camera in her ski regalia. What was most noticeable—and controversial—about the pose was its phallic nature: Vonn's backside was arched at a forty-five-degree angle while superimposed over a mountain peak.

Offensive as this portrayal may have been, it came as no surprise to sports-media scholars. Over the past three decades we have amassed a large body of empirical evidence demonstrating that sportswomen are significantly more likely to be portrayed in ways that emphasize their femininity and heterosexuality rather than their athletic prowess. Study after study has revealed that newspaper and TV coverage around

the globe routinely and systematically focuses on the athletic exploits of male athletes while offering hypersexualized images of their female counterparts.

These findings are no trivial matter. Scholars have long argued that a major consequence of the media's tendency to sexualize women's athletic accomplishments is the reinforcement of their status as second-class citizens in one of the most powerful economic, social and political institutions on the planet. In doing so, media images that emphasize femininity/sexuality actually suppress interest in, not to mention respect for, women's sports.

Many of those charged with covering and promoting women's sports take an entirely different view. As the quote beginning this article makes clear, the "sex sells" strategy remains deeply embedded among sports journalists and marketers, who also believe that reaffirming traditional notions of femininity and heterosexuality is a critical sales strategy. This approach, or so the argument goes, reassures (especially male) fans, corporate sponsors and TV audiences that females can engage in highly competitive sports while retaining a nonthreatening femininity.



The widely held assumption that sexualizing female athletes is the most effective way to promote women's sports creates cognitive dissonance. To begin with, marketing campaigns for leagues like the WNBA also emphasize the wholesome nature of women's sports, highlighting the connection between fathers and daughters. The underlying message is that women's sports embrace traditional "family values" and that their appeal cuts across generational lines. Given this message, a "sex sells" strategy is counterproductive. How many fathers would accept the notion that support for their daughters' sports participation would be increased by having them pose nude in *Playboy*? And should we buy the argument that what generates fan interest is how pretty athletes are versus how well they perform when a championship is on the line?

I don't disagree that when *SI* publishes its swimsuit issue males are quite interested in buying that particular issue of the magazine. It does not automatically follow, however, that their interest in women's sports has increased. On the contrary, I would argue that what males are interested in consuming is not a women's athletic event but sportswomen's bodies as objects of sexual desire.

To investigate empirically whether sex truly sells women's sports, I conducted a series of focus groups based on gender and age (18–34; 35–55) with a colleague at the University of Minnesota. Study participants were shown photographs of female athletes ranging from on-court athletic competence to wholesome "girls next door" to soft pornography and asked to indicate which images increased their interest in reading about, watching on TV and attending a women's sporting event.

Our findings revealed that in the vast majority of cases, a "sex sells" approach offended the core fan base of women's sports—women and older men. These two groups rated the image that portrayed athletic prowess as the one most likely to influence their interest in women's sports. Said one younger female: "This image [of a WNBA player driving toward the basket] really sucked me in. I want to be there. I want to be part of that feeling." In contrast, younger and older females, as well as older males, were offended by the hypersexualized images. One older male said: "If she [Serena Williams in a sexually provocative pose] were my sister I'd come in, slap the photographer, grab her and leave." Even when younger males, a prime target audience, indicated that sexually provocative images were "hot," they also stated that such images did not fundamentally increase their interest in women's sports, particularly when it came to attending a sporting event. The key takeaway? Sex sells sex, not women's sports.

So what *does* sell women's sports? The answer lies with women's college basketball and the coverage it receives on ESPN. Each year during the NCAA's March Madness tournament, women's hoops garner record attendance and TV ratings. Coverage of the women's Final Four bears a remarkable resemblance to that of the men's—a focus on great traditions, conference rivalries (Duke vs. North Carolina), legendary coaches (Pat Summitt vs. Geno Auriemma)—and, most important, showcasing sportswomen as physically gifted, mentally tough, grace-under-pressure athletes.

Millions of fans around the globe just witnessed such media images and narratives during coverage of the Women's World Cup in Germany. Perhaps such coverage will start a trend whereby those who cover women's sports will simply turn on the camera and let us see the reality—not the sexualized caricature—of today's female athletes. If and when that happens, sportswomen will receive the respect and admiration they so richly deserve.

**Mary Jo Kane** July 27, 2011 | This article appeared in the August 15–22, 2011 edition of *The Nation*.

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# Can using different types of models benefit brands?

Fashion companies could be missing out on the bottom line when they use only one kind of model.

BY

**BEN BARRY**

Source: <http://www.ellecanada.com/living/culture/can-using-different-types-of-models-benefit-brands/a/58327>

When I first explained the topic of my doctoral thesis to my academic colleagues at Cambridge University, I was met with puzzled looks. “Models in advertising?” one asked. “You mean the economic model of advertising?” another questioned. I attempted to clarify: “I’m studying models in advertising—the women in the advertisements— and particularly in fashion advertisements,” I said.

Their confusion and curiosity weren’t unexpected. Although the impact of models on body image has been studied, very little research has been done on how models—depending on their size, age and race—influence purchasing decisions. Instead, marketers rely on long-established industry norms to guide their casting decisions. I wanted to challenge those norms to see if there was a business case to support a more diversified approach.

My research, which was funded by the Ogilvy Foundation, took me to cities across Canada and the United States, where I surveyed and facilitated focus groups with more than 2,500 women. They ranged in age from 14 to 65 and in



dress size from 0 to 18, and they reflected a range of ethnicities. I recorded their responses to mock fashion ads—which I created for my study—that featured models who varied in size, age and race but all wore the same Diane von Furstenberg wrap dress. Save for the models, the ads were identical. My findings were surprisingly intuitive and yet revolutionary within the fashion industry. I'll get to the numbers in a moment. First, it's important to understand what misguided theories—rather than facts—are behind the casting decisions companies make for their marketing campaigns.

The general assumption that models are merely “clothes hangers” is rather pervasive in the multi-billion-dollar fashion industry, but they play a much more influential role: They are the bridge between the consumer and the brand. They not only demonstrate how clothes fit and flatter the human body but also convey a brand's image and identity. Most important, they breathe movement and vitality into clothes—transforming static garments into three-dimensional creations.

Yet, in spite of this, companies seldom cast models who reflect their markets. The typical model is size 2, whereas the average woman is size 14. Most models are between the ages of 15 and 24, yet there are more Canadians between 40 and 49 or 50 and 64. Only 10 percent of models in North American fashion ads are non-Caucasian, yet 16 percent of the Canadian population is non-Caucasian—and that increases to 40 percent for Toronto and Vancouver.

In the business community, the general consensus is that there is a discrepancy between marketing and the market because fashion advertising fuels consumer demand by creating a craving that can't be satisfied. In other words, marketers hire models to sell an image that most women can aspire to but never achieve. As Karl Lagerfeld explained in a recent interview on CNN: “Unreachable beauty is a reminder to make an effort. But if you see something, and you can reach what you see, then you do not have to make an effort anymore.”

Researcher Naomi Mandel puts it more bluntly in reference to her work on models and self-esteem: “It's better to use extremely thin models because that's what makes women feel bad about themselves and want to buy the products.” She adds that because women will never be as thin as the models, they'll always feel inadequate and continually demand the clothes.

Marketers also explain away the lack of diversity on “economies of scale”—a.k.a. the sample size. Fashion brands create a prototype of each garment in their collection—a sample—for marketing purposes months before its retail production. The sample is a size 2, which means that the model hired for fashion shows and ads must be a size 2. Although brands typically spend \$750,000 to



show at New York Fashion Week, they argue that creating samples in a few sizes—such as 4, 8 and 14—is too expensive; the extra inches of fabric might put them in the red.

Although I've worked as a modelling agent in the fashion industry for 15 years, I've never subscribed to the traditional viewpoint. My dad passed away when I was young, so I grew up surrounded and supported by women. While my mom, grandmother and aunt didn't look like typical models, I was always in awe of their beauty. I remember seeing my then 75-year-old grandmother on the night of her 50th wedding anniversary—in a floor-length ivory gown—and thinking that she was the most beautiful woman in the world.

When I was 14 years old, I had a friend who wanted to be a model, but every agency she went to told her that she was “too big.” I was shocked; I couldn't understand why she—a size 12—was being rejected. I sent her pictures to a magazine and landed her a fashion spread. With one gig under my belt, I became her agent. Now, 15 years later, my single client has turned into a roster of 100 models who range in size, age, background and ability.

My experiences have fostered the steadfast belief that the fashion industry needs to broaden its perception of beauty—and I am not alone. Since the publication of Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* more than two decades ago, the debate over the size of models has gone mainstream. Hardly a fashion week goes by without the topic making headlines around the world. The story has been that ultra-thin models harm some women's well-being; by living in a culture where only thinness is celebrated, many women internalize it as their own beauty standard.

Some governments share this viewpoint. In Italy, legislation was enacted to prevent models who are too skinny from strutting catwalks. The French government considered imposing fines—even jail terms—on brand executives who promote “excessive thinness” in ads. Here in Canada, the Quebec provincial government introduced the Quebec Charter for Healthy and Diverse Body Image in 2009 to encourage the fashion industry to promote diversity. These responses are logical—governments are in the business of protecting the health of their citizens. But the fashion industry is in the business of business; it will only be motivated to diversify if it's a strategy that boosts the bottom line.

Recent anecdotal evidence has demonstrated that it can. When Dove launched its ads with “real women” in the United States, sales increased by 600 percent in two months. You'd think that such success would stir industry-wide change en masse; it didn't. The campaign's success was written off as an anomaly, and it was suggested that it was effective only because its novelty generated media



attention. From the fashion perspective, Robert Kolker, a media-studies professor at the University of Maryland, argues that Dove's strategy is unlikely to translate to fashion brands because selling fashion is about illusion: "The ideal is too lovely a fantasy to give up.... Fairy tales are more potent than reality."

Nevertheless, some fashion brands have courageously, yet cautiously, used curvy and mature models. In September 2010, Tom Ford launched his eponymous womenswear collection during New York Fashion Week by showcasing his creations on a diverse group of women, including Rita Wilson and Lauren Hutton. Jean Paul Gaultier cast several models in the size 10 to 14 range to walk in his Spring/Summer 2011 show at Paris Fashion Week. He even hired plus-size singer Beth Ditto to open and close the show. But with only a few of these models in one show, and never in ad campaigns, their ability to help or hinder sales is unclear.

With my research, I hoped to explore that business potential. My study entailed two phases. In the first phase, I conducted experiments to test women's purchase intentions when they viewed models who had similar and dissimilar sizes, ages and races to themselves. Each woman was randomly shown two of eight possible ads where the models might have reflected some of their traits, all of their traits or none of their traits. To avoid biasing their opinions, I didn't reveal the true aims of my study to them. In the second phase, I facilitated focus groups with different women to help identify reasons for particular purchase intentions. I found that Canadian and American women increased purchase intentions for fashion products advertised by models who reflected their own demographics: age, size and—for non-Caucasians—race. While one side of the debate over model diversity argues that curvy models should replace thin ones— assuming that one model is universally more effective than another—I find that every model type can be effective. Their effectiveness depends on whether the model shares the consumers' traits.

My study found that women increased their purchase intentions by more than 200 percent when the models in the mock ads were their size. In the subgroup over size 6, women increased their purchase intentions by a dramatic 300 percent when they saw curvier models. Conversely, when women saw models who didn't reflect their size, they decreased their purchase intentions by 60 percent, and women over size 6 dropped their purchase intentions by 76 percent.

My results weren't limited to the issue of size. Consumers increased their purchase intentions by over 175 percent when they saw models who reflected their age; in particular, women over the age of 35 increased their purchase intentions by 200 percent when they saw older models. When models didn't reflect their age, consumers decreased their purchase intentions by 64 percent.



Furthermore, black consumers were 1.5 times more likely to purchase a product advertised by a black model.

The numbers paint an interesting picture, but they don't tell the women's stories: Why did women increase purchase intentions when models looked like them? In the focus groups, women explained that they could better picture themselves in the dress advertised by similar models. They could imagine how the dress would flatter their shape, how the aesthetic would suit their age and how the colours would complement their complexion. One woman, on viewing a similar-looking model, put it this way: "I'd buy the dress in an instant because [the model] looks like me. I can see how this dress will hug my curves in all the right spots."

I also discovered that women—especially those seldom reflected in fashion ads—felt beautiful and confident when they saw models who reflected their traits and felt motivated to buy the dress. When one mature woman saw an older model, she explained: "[The model] does more than make me feel beautiful; she inspires me to go out and get this dress and celebrate my beauty." While some women in my study felt insecure when they saw idealized models, their insecurity didn't translate to purchase intentions as the industry hopes; it actually turned them off the product. As one of the participants summarized: "Ads like this want us to be part of their world, but they have the opposite effect for me. I feel excluded."

Contrary to long-held marketing wisdom, fashion ads don't need to lead women to aspire to an unattainable ideal to sell products. Instead, women will buy fashion when models convey a realistic, attainable image and make them feel confident; they will continue to demand the products to maintain the advertised look and their feelings of empowerment. To unleash this economic potential, brands should cast models who mirror the diversity of their target market: If a brand sells sizes 2 to 14 and the age of their target consumer is 18 to 35, the models should reflect the same size and age ranges. It's clearly in a brand's financial interest to create samples in a few sizes to reflect the diversity of their consumers.

My focus groups also revealed the conditions that need to be met if diverse models are going to be effective. Younger to middle-aged women explained that a fashion brand's commitment to diversity is just as important as showcasing it. As a result of online media, consumers—not only fashion journalists—now see the latest collections from fashion weeks around the world. When two of 20 models on a runway are larger or older, consumers appreciate the gesture but believe it's tokenistic. As one participant noted: "Showing one older woman out of 30 is really a marketing ploy—it's not a genuine appreciation of our beauty and, more important, our spending power." Tokenism also springs to mind when brands feature diverse models on their runways but not in their campaigns or



merely as a one-time occurrence. Similarly, when a brand showcases curvy or older models in clothes that don't quite fit or flatter them, it looks like they're trying to grab a quick headline.

Marketers may also assume that using a larger or older model allows them to skimp on the creative direction—resulting in an image that looks more like a passport photo than a fashion ad. This practice reverses the positive effects of casting diverse models. The women in my research want models—regardless of size or age—to inspire them with glamour, artistry and creativity. One woman said it best: “What’s the point of buying fashion if you’re going to look unfashionable?” **The underlying message is that fashion needs to sell aspiration, but it is not a standardized model’s age, size or race that is aspirational; it is the clothes, styling and creative direction of the shoot.**

What would our world look like if the results of my research influenced reality? Imagine this: You open a fashion magazine. It is filled with stunning glossy ads from the top fashion and beauty brands. You see gorgeous clothes, dramatic hair and makeup and breathtaking photography. **Starring in these ads—showcasing fashion’s glamour, artistry and creativity—**are models who reflect the full panorama of women’s beauty. So, brands, I ask you this: Will you continue to use an outdated marketing model or adapt to the new consumer mindset and reap the rewards?



## What the pros are saying

Carissa Moore 8/27/13

*To be honest I'm a little undecided. I think it's great that the girls in our sport are so attractive and they're athletes and they rip... and if you ask anyone on the beach their favorite surfer it would probably be Alana Blanchard. That's great she brings a lot of eyes to our sport but I've definitely been on the opposite site of the spectrum. I've definitely been criticized for my looks, last year I gained a little bit of weight, I wasn't doing as well on tour and you hear comments like, "She's had one too many cheeseburgers and it's hurtful you know?" But unfortunately we're in a sport where you're in a bathing suit the whole time... But my whole approach is I just want to be an athlete and I love surfing and if I'm fit and my body feels good that's great.*

*-source: <http://www.theinertia.com/surf/carissa-moore-headspace/>*

# USING SEX TO SELL SURFING: THE BACKLASH CONTINUES WITH COMMENTS FROM COCO HO AND PAULINE ADO

12:44

10th September 2013

By Sam Haddad

Two weeks ago we ran an interview with Carissa Moore in which she talked about her reservations around the current sexing up of surfing.

It's a topic we also chatted to Coco Ho about at last month's Swatch Girls Pro France, and we're posting for the first time now. She'd said recently that female surfers "can be sexy and the athlete" and I was interested in whether she thought you could go too far on the sexy thing. She said:

*There's definitely a point where you can go too far. I'm very family orientated so that's where I draw the line. Would I be comfortable with my brother and Dad seeing it? **Would they be proud of me?***

Solid advice. And for any young girl using social media in fact. I asked about the slutty slogans some of the girls were sporting at the US Open and she said:

*Seeing the US Open and **Anastasia's thing** it's kinda **disheartening** for sure. It's just like would your family be proud? Would your grandmother be like that's my granddaughter? And that's where I find my fine line. Would my brother still want to look at it, a future husband and so on.*

The Swatch Pro also threw up a cool interview with Pauline Ado on Magic Seaweed in which Ed Temperley asks her how she feels about the media's current representation of women's surfing. She says:

*I think right now there's a little too much of a sexy part sometimes. And I think we need to play this part. But we need to keep it like ... how do you say? **In French we call it class.** Sometimes the boundaries are a bit too far. We are athletes you know, and being an athlete is sexy. I think there are ways to present things and sometimes it is a little too much.*

Ed Temperley later asks, "If she believes getting it all out on Instagram is just a trend? Is there a scenario in which over-exposure could reverse and become deeply unfashionable?" She says:

*It could. I just hope that we'll find the boundaries. **I guess it makes people talk about women's surfing, but not, maybe, in the best way.** I hope we will find the boundaries and be back to a classy way of representation.*

Word to that. Where's it all going to go from here? Who knows but we're watching.

Especially now that research shows women consumers respond better (as in buy more shit!) when women are represented as athletes and not sex symbols.



“‘The blame isn’t on the athlete,’ Fink continued. ‘They’re playing the only game that exists. I think soon the marketing executives and mainstream media need to realize how the next generation wants to see its female athletes. And that’s simply as athletes.’

The irony, as both Fink and Lavoie point out, is that some female athletes, and entire leagues, are still glamming themselves up in the name of mainstream appeal, even though several studies have shown (for male and female athletes) there is no correlation between seeing a sexy image and then actually turning on the game to watch the player whose sexy image you have seen.

‘Actually, what helps, believe it or not, is to show their true athletic ability,’ Fink said.

***Talent sells.’***

# Emerging Trends

What can toys, Vogue, and CrossFit tell us about emerging trends in consumer markets?



## **Toys R Us in the UK to end gender- specific marketing**

Toys R Us stores in the UK will stop marketing products in a gender-specific manner.  
Sept. 7, 2013 | EliEpsteinofMSNNews

Following lobbying from a parents advocacy group, Toys R Us in the U.K. will stop marketing its products as gender- specific. Could such a trend catch on in the U.S.? Toys R Us will create more gender-neutral marketing and remove references to gender in its stores in the United Kingdom, the Telegraph reported this week. The changes came following pressure from an advocacy group.

Let Toys Be Toys, a U.K.-based parents group that petitioned Toys R Us for the change, reported on its website Wednesday that it had reached an agreement with the retailer to strike "explicit" references to gender in its stores and feature more ads with girls and boys playing with the same toys.

The organization has lobbied retailers, marketers and advertisers across the U.K. to raise awareness of gender-stereotyped toys. Let Toys Be Toys has made agreements with popular British chains such as Tesco, Sainsbury's, The Entertainer and TK Maxx to alter the way they market toys.

Toys R Us' pact with Let Toys Be Toys will apply only to the retail giant's U.K. stores, but a spokesperson for the company said it does not have gender-based sections in any of its U.S. stores. Instead, its stores are organized by product type. The company's 2011 U.S. holiday catalog contained 83 images of boys and 93 of girls, a closer ratio than Kmart, Sears, Target and Wal-Mart, according to an assessment by trade publication Gifts and Decorative Accessories.

"As a company, we will continue to be diligent and caring in gender portrayals throughout our stores and in our various marketing vehicles," Kathleen Waugh, vice president of corporate communications at Toys R Us, said in a statement to MSN News. While the fight against gender labeling in the toy industry has been waged for years, it wasn't as common in past decades, when many toys were thought of as universal, said author Carrie Goldman, whose book, "Bullied: What Every Parent, Teacher and Kid Needs to Know About Ending the Cycle of Fear," includes an entire chapter dedicated to gender-specific marketing.

"In the '70s," she said, "toys were toys." "You played with what was put out." According to Goldman, that ethos has changed, due in large part to savvy marketers and manufacturers who realized they can make more money by creating gender-specific products.

### **Related: Top toy trends of 2013**

"Marketers discovered that a pink ball sells best for girls and a blue one sells best for boys," Goldman said. "Previously parents purchased a single ball but this way you can make twice as much money."

"The girl says, 'I want my own ball,' and so does the boy."

This shift created problems for parents and kids, advocates say. Children lose opportunities to develop sharing skills, and they become marginalized if they choose to play with a toy that's been assigned to the opposite sex.

Gender-specific marketing can be particularly harmful for young girls who are sexualized by marketers and advertisers, advocates say.

"Whereas 15 to 20 years ago you had pink products for girls," Goldman said, "now you have sexy pink products. You see it at Halloween where every girl's costume has been sexualized — sexy witch instead of witch, sexy super hero instead of super hero."

Dr. Deborah L. Tolman, a professor of psychology at the Hunter College School of Social Work and co-founder of SPARK, a group that works to promote the healthy sexuality of girls, calls this "showing things with your body and not doing things," and believes gendered costumes and toys confine girls within gendered roles that have already been broken down for them.

"The primary outcome for girls is not having aspirations and thinking they're not able to do the kinds of work that was gendered, but no longer is," she said. "Plenty of women are engineers and scientists. Plenty of girls are now in what have stereotypically been male lines of work."

Tolman said progress has been made though, especially in terms of groups who are organizing and asking companies and marketers to make a shift in how they deal with children's products.

"We're seeing more grassroots organizations generating alternative ideas and more attention being paid in the media about problematizing the princess culture," she said. "Hopefully what's happened in the U.K. is an indication of what may happen in the U.S. going forward."



# British Vogue to Educate on Image Making

September 5, 2013

By Julia Neel

A spread from the July issue of British Vogue, photographed by Josh Olins.  
Photo By Courtesy Photo

LONDON — Editor of British Vogue Alexandra Shulman has launched a lesson for school children that is intended to give them an insight into the process that goes into creating magazine editorials.

"As Editor of Vogue, I am frequently asked about the influence and messages the images in the magazine send to our readers about body image," said Shulman. "Our mission in Vogue's fashion pictures is to inspire and entertain while showing the clothes created by many highly talented designers. They are created with this intention in mind, not to represent reality. The problem, if there is a problem, comes when people judge themselves and their appearance against the models they see on the pages of a magazine and then feel that in some way they fall short."

The lesson includes a short film, "It's A Look," which features interviews with Vogue's fashion director Lucinda Chambers, fashion bookings editor Rosie Vogel and creative director Jaime Perlman, as well as fashion photographer Josh Olins, make-up artist Sally Branka and model Drake Burnette, who explain the complex process of creating a fashion image. The film, which also features behind-the-scenes footage of a photoshoot that appeared in the July 2013 issue of the magazine, is introduced by Shulman and narrated by British model Jade Parfit.

This is part of the ongoing Health Initiative launched by the international editors of Vogue in May last year. "I decided it might be helpful to show what goes into the creation of a Vogue fashion picture, as a way of illustrating the skill and artifice that makes the final product," explained Shulman. "We have made a small film for schoolchildren, which shows the colossal amount of work and the many people involved in a fashion shoot, in the hope that this might be interesting and help pupils gain a better understanding."

The launch of "It's A Look," which will be supplied with a lesson plan and teachers' notes, coincides with the beginning of the new academic year in the U.K. It is expected that the lesson will sit within the Personal Wellbeing curriculum for high school students 15-16 years old, however Vogue says it has received interest from teachers of other age groups too.

[WWD.com/media-news/media-features/british-vogue-to-educate-on-image-making-7111704](http://WWD.com/media-news/media-features/british-vogue-to-educate-on-image-making-7111704)



# DAILY LIFE

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## The problem with Vogue UK's educational film

Kathleen Lee-Joe

Published: September 9, 2013 - 11:58PM

If I told you that *Vogue* was going to school kids in classrooms, you might raise an eyebrow, right? Well, it's happening with *Vogue* UK coming out with a [lesson plan](#), which includes a film and teacher's notes, designed to do just that.

Advertisement

As part of the magazine's Health Initiative, the education package will be sent to high schools across the UK, specifically targeting 15- to 16-year-old girls. Editor of British *Vogue* Alexandra Shulman says the lesson is intended to give students an in-depth understanding of the process that goes into creating magazine editorials, in the hopes that it will encourage a healthier approach to body image.

"The problem, if there is a problem, comes when people judge themselves and their appearance against the models they see on the pages of a magazine and then feel that in some way they fall short," she says.

The lesson kicks off with a short film titled *It's A Look*, featuring interviews with the many professionals who lend a hand in image creation – from fashion directors and photographers, to make-up artists and models. "I decided it might be helpful to show what goes into the creation of a *Vogue* fashion picture, as a way of illustrating the skill and artifice that makes the final product," says Shulman.

Though Schulman ought to be commended for being one of the only editors in *Vogue*'s history to address issues regarding body image, [speaking out on size zero culture](#) and publicly asking designers why their sample sizes are so small, we're not entirely convinced her latest effort will do anything to shift perceptions.

That's because the whole premise for making the film is flawed, that is, why does the problem lie with the public's perception – and not the magazine itself? Why must we be the ones to change the way we approach and view editorials, while *Vogue* can continue to push its damaging agenda with unrealistic photo spreads?

Even if you're adept to what goes on behind the scenes (as most of us are), when the media is saturated with images of size-zero models in [whitewashed campaigns](#), it's hard not to internalise these images. And impressionable teens are particularly vulnerable to doing so.

*Vogue* may position itself as escapist entertainment that's purely aspirational, but it nevertheless continues to promote an impossible beauty standard, which ultimately affects our conceptions of our own bodies. As Holly Baxter [comments](#) in the *Guardian UK*,

"Ultimately, it [the film] is a massive disclaimer so that her [Shulman's] magazine can keep on producing exactly what it has done all along."

We can't help but think a better solution would be to diversify the images presented in the magazine in the first place. Surely,



hiring models from different backgrounds who closer reflect reality, and not photoshopping them to an inch of their lives, would do more good than yet another pretentious fashion film?

*This story was found at: <http://www.dailylife.com.au/dl-fashion/fashion-coverage/the-problem-with-vogue-uks-educational-film-20130909-2tf6g.html>*

September 4, 2013

# GoDaddy Steps Away From the Jiggle

By STUART ELLIOTT

A MARKETER whose sexy advertising polarized consumers for years is trying to distance itself even more from its previous provocative approach, as executives seek to strike a balance between being noticed and being castigated.

In a commercial scheduled to begin running on Thursday, GoDaddy, the Internet services company, will recast itself as a helpmate to small-business owners by adopting a new theme for its advertising, “It’s go time.” The commercial, by Deutsch New York, part of the Deutsch division of the Interpublic Group of Companies, features the action movie star Jean-Claude Van Damme playfully embodying the new GoDaddy brand personality by enabling entrepreneurs to meet whatever challenges they face.

In interviews and news releases, GoDaddy executives are describing the new brand personality with phrases like the one a family newspaper would paraphrase as “enabling our customers to kick tail.” But the sassy unparaphrased version is missing from the commercial, which will appear on godaddy.com as well as on television, initially during the NBC coverage of the first game of the N.F.L.’s 2013-14 season.

The changes in GoDaddy’s approach arrive as marketers and consumers debate how far is too far when it comes to language and imagery in mainstream ads. The original GoDaddy brand personality was characterized by buxom, scantily clad women called “GoDaddy Girls”; ad copy replete with double entendres, many delivered by the racecar driver Danica Patrick; and online commercials that were racier than the eyebrow-raising television versions. Bob Parsons, the founder of GoDaddy who was then its chief executive, originated and reveled in those tactics for what he called “GoDaddy-esque” ads.

Warren Adelman, who took over from Mr. Parsons when GoDaddy came under new ownership in 2011, ended that approach in favor of a tack focused on products and services. In June 2012 he hired Deutsch New York, the company’s first outside agency, which a month later brought out a commercial that paired the sexy side of GoDaddy with a smart, technically proficient side. The “smart meets sexy” idea was reiterated in a spot that ran in February during Super Bowl XLVII, which drew attention for a long kiss between the model Bar Refaeli and a nerdy actor, Jesse Heiman. By that time, GoDaddy had another chief executive, Blake Irving, who was even more determined to put the “GoDaddy-esque” ads in the past.



“We got a lot of attention — we were edgy, funny,” Mr. Irving said in a phone interview, referring to the original brand personality. “We were also on the edge of inappropriate.”

That affected GoDaddy’s dealings with the online marketplace Etsy, he said, which “has a contingent of women business owners,” adding that executives at Etsy told him they were “getting so much pressure” for doing business with GoDaddy.

There is another way to advertise, Mr. Irving said, that “doesn’t have to push customers away: still edgy, still fun, still entertaining, still irreverent” but “talking in a more grown-up way, doing things that are hilarious, memorable and don’t polarize.”

The Van Damme campaign is “meme-able,” he added — that is, likely to generate positive attention through being shared by consumers in social media.

In the commercial, a baker who needs dough sees on his PC that his business, Ben’s Bread Box, has 25 new orders to fill. Suddenly, Mr. Van Damme appears in the kitchen, not as an actor but as a one-man band, playing a peppy tune, performing some of his trademark splits and declaring, “It’s go time.” Motivated, the baker completes kneading the dough for all the orders. On screen, the words “More business. More ready. It’s go time” appear as Mr. Van Damme whispers: “It’s go time. GoDaddy.”

Greg DiNoto, partner and chief creative officer at Deutsch New York, said: “We wanted an inspiring line that sounded consistent with the GoDaddy brand. ‘It’s go time’ says we support small-business owners, helping them get ready to do battle, ready to step up. Jean-Claude Van Damme is representative of the spirit of this go-getter target audience; he winkingly says, ‘Let’s do business, let’s kill it.’ ”

For all the consumers who were turned off by the “GoDaddy-esque” ads, there were many hardcore fans who delighted in them. “Those folks who loved GoDaddy in the past and are small-business owners will feel even more understood by GoDaddy,” Mr. DiNoto said. “They’ll think, ‘Now GoDaddy is really bringing it, with substantive tools.’ ”

On the other side of the coin, “whatever we’ve lost in ‘sexy’ we hope we’ve gained in smart and substantial,” he added.

Competitors are watching whether GoDaddy can walk the line between keeping its fans and changing minds among critics. For instance, Anthony Casalena, chief executive of the New York-based hosting service Squarespace, said: “Companies have a DNA. It’s difficult to say you’re different from the way you were the past 10 years. That’s a challenge for them.”

Mr. Casalena described Squarespace — which recently introduced a low-key campaign, on

television and online, that was created internally — as a company that didn't need to reset its image.

“The image you put online is important,” he said. “We want to create a platform where designers and art directors, people serious about image and branding, align with us.”

Barb Rechterman, executive vice president and chief marketing officer at GoDaddy, said the new campaign would benefit from a decision to “move some advertising dollars forward” into the fourth quarter from next year.

In the first quarter of 2013, the most recent period for which data were available, GoDaddy spent \$11.6 million to advertise in major media, the Kantar Media unit of WPP reported; ad spending totaled \$34.6 million last year, \$35 million in 2011, \$31.4 million in 2010 and \$22.3 million in 2009.



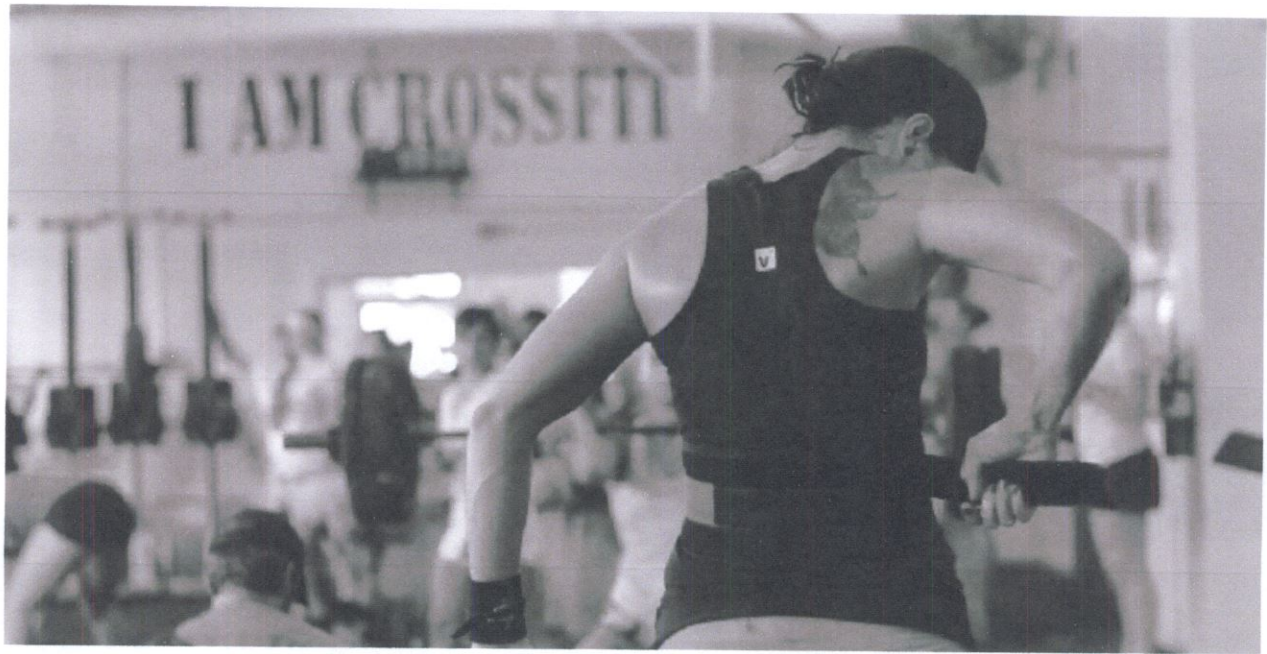
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"Reaching deep within, we find the strength to push ourselves further than ever thought possible.

We harness that power; we stand up and rise above ALL challenges.

We show the world that WE ARE STRONG."

-CrossFit Central, Aug. 27, 2013  
source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=501480023270063>

## Fitness Brand Crossfit Taps its Tight-Knit Community for Fast Growth

*Published:* November 27, 2011

Speak to anyone who's done CrossFit and they'll rave about the tight-knit community, the dedication of the trainers and the brutal but effective workouts. The strength and conditioning program combines weightlifting and gymnastics, sprints and rowing, kettlebells and jump ropes.

What appeals to many is the camaraderie and the inclusiveness, said Jimi Letchford, chief marketing officer. Gyms post a "workout of the day," which is completed by everyone exercising that day.

"The way we look at fitness is what I need, you need, the Marine needs, his grandmother needs, a guy with one leg needs and a kid needs is all the same. It just varies in degree," said Mr. Letchford, a former U.S. Marine infantry officer.

Today there are 3,500 affiliates in 61 countries, with about 50 added each week. Mr. Letchford expects 30,000 affiliates in five years.

Last year, Reebok inked a 10-year deal to be the title sponsor of the CrossFit Games, which ESPN has agreed to air for the next two years. Reebok is also producing CrossFit footwear and apparel, as well as operating its own gym.

Still, the brand is shying away from traditional marketing and agency relationships, instead focusing on "just making good relationships," Mr. Letchford said.





**Patrick Rishe**, Contributor

I cover the economics of the sports industry.

7/28/2013 @ 12:54AM | 29,418 views

## 2013 Reebok CrossFit Games Personifies Continued Growth For Sport And Sponsor

Normally, if on a sunny summer Saturday I found myself lounging at the newly-coined StubHub! Center in Carson CA just 20 minutes south of downtown Los Angeles, I'd be attending a Los Angeles Galaxy soccer match... rooting for the likes of U.S. national stars like Landon Donovan and Omar Gonzalez.

But on this afternoon, the talk in the air isn't of corner kicks, through balls, nutmegs, or headers.

Instead, the talk is of Group Burpees, Naughty Nancies, Clean and Jerks, and Sprint Chippers.

Welcome to the 2013 Reebok CrossFit Games.

Welcome to a sport that continues to grow worldwide.

Welcome to a sponsor that continues to see the fruits of this union.

Since the inaugural CrossFit Games held in Aromas CA in 2007, the games have grown in stature over time...eventually outgrowing "The Ranch" in Aromas and migrating south to Carson's multi-sport complex in 2010. But even at the StubHub! Center, expansion has continued. The 2013 event marks the first time in 4 years that the competitors are using the soccer stadium for individual and team events throughout The Games weekend.

The growth of 'the sport of fitness' has been [nothing short of astounding](#). As my Forbes colleague David Tao [recently wrote](#):

“ Today [CrossFit boasts over 6,000 affiliated gyms](#) worldwide, and its cultivation in regions like Europe, Asia, and the Middle East has helped established a truly global fitness brand.

During the spring of 2013, a total of 138,000 athletes from 118 countries took part in *The Open* stage of qualifying...where open workouts were announced a live online broadcasts each week. A total of 779 men and 668 women qualified for individual competition at Regionals, as did 509 teams comprised of 3 men and 3 women each. From the Regionals, 47 individual men, 45 individual women, 43 teams, and 200 Masters athletes were awarded spots at

the 2013 Reebok CrossFit Games.

In 2007, the inaugural Games in Aromas had a mere 70 athletes.

So what sorts of things do you see at a CrossFit Games:

I watched Team CrossFit Fort Vancouver win the Squat Burpee competition in 13 minutes 43 seconds. This event entailed 3 rounds of 30 squats with a huge worm shouldered by the team, followed by 30 burpees over the worm;

- I watched 22-year old Amanda Goodman win the women's individual clean and jerk with a winning lift of 235 pounds;

- I watched top male competitors Jason Khalipa and two-time defending champion Rich Froning attempt to chase down but ultimately fall shy of the leading 355-pound clean and jerk mark set by Aja Barto and Lucas Parker.

Apart from the growth in competitors, the attendee growth has expanded as well. The soccer stadium easily hosted 10,000 CrossFit enthusiasts during Saturday's morning session, while the intimate tennis setting was jam-packed for the afternoon sessions.

And there is no question that *both* sides continue to benefit from this partnership. Chris Froio, Vice President of Fitness and Training at Reebok, verified how fruitful the relationship with CrossFit has been for Reebok.

"We've seen double-digit growth in footwear and apparel sales the last few years. Unquestionably, we can tie a significant portion of that growth to our partnership with CrossFit."

Mr. Froio further noted that one of the keys to maintaining brand integrity is to ensure a certain degree of market scarcity. "We simply want to make sure we avoid over-exposure and over-distribution. Keep demand exceeding supply."

In July 2010, well before Reebok or any other major sponsor entered the fray, one of my first posts with Forbes was entitled "*The CrossFit Games: An Action Sports Investment Opportunity in the Making*".

I'm not surprised by the immense success of this partnership, and only time will tell how long both CrossFit and Reebok can sustain the growth rates realized since the partnership commenced.

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This article is available online at:

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## CrossFit's Relationship with Reebok Enhances Its Financial and Commercial Credibility

 **Patrick Rishe**, Contributor

I'm not often prophetic, but must pat myself on the back for calling this one.

After last year's CrossFit Games, I posted a piece entitled [The CrossFit Games: An Action Sport Investment Opportunity in the Making](#).

A year later, and we are roughly one week away from the 2011 **Reebok** CrossFit Games.

Call *me* Nostradamus.

And call *this sport* one of the fastest growing sports in America which only looks to build upon the financial and popular successes it has achieved in just one short year.

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### *Reebok Joins the Fray and Raises the Stakes*

The financial prosperity and enhanced visibility that CrossFit has enjoyed in the last 12 months have been tremendous, thanks in large part to their relatively new partnership with sports giant Reebok who has signed a 10-year deal with CrossFit.

"We have seen large gains in commercial success with bringing on Reebok as a partner to the [CrossFit Games](#)", according to Dave Castro, Director of the CrossFit Games as well as Director of Training. "Reebok is helping us take the event to the next level in terms of exposure and what they can do for the athletes."

One major difference and motivator for this year's competitors is the Herculean jump in prize money. Said Mr. Castro, "Our cash prize for the Games has jumped from \$25,000 in 2010 to a total purse of \$1 million for 2011, with **\$250,000 going to the top male and female athlete**. All thanks to Reebok."

And Reebok has gone so far as to embrace and incorporate the CrossFit training regime into their corporate philosophy as well as their day-to-day operations. "Reebok is really going full-bore, having opened up a CrossFit gym at Reebok HQ and hiring two elite CrossFit athletes as coaches for their staff", according to Kareem Mayan. Mr. Mayan is the co-founder of [SocialWOD.com](#), a "WOD" tracking site for CrossFit affiliates. [WOD stands for 'Workout of the Day'](#), and it's these daily workouts that craft and sculpt some of the fittest athletes in the world.

Reebok has obviously bought in without muscling in. The feedback I've received from several CrossFit athletes is that **Reebok has embraced their feedback on product design, which strategically will only build a stronger brand with the CrossFit demographic going forward and ultimately help the company produce the best-quality possible in both footwear and athletic wear for the elite athlete.**

### *Financial Transformation Consistent with Personal Transformations*

What continues to amaze me beyond the short-term financial transformation of CrossFit is how the sport/activity **encourages and promotes personal transformation.**

"Aside from putting me in the best shape of my life, it's the first fitness program I've been able to stick to over the long term without burning out", said [Leah Polaski](#). Ms. Polaski, Vice President with Renaissance Property Group, recently took 1st place in the Southeast Regionals and will be representing her [CrossFit Atlanta](#) affiliate in the women's individual competition during the 2011 Games.

"CrossFit is also the only program that has and continues to provide tangible results for me. Whether in my body composition, my work capacity, or my strength. They've all continued to improve over my first 2 years using CrossFit", said Ms. Polaski.

A former Division I soccer player at the University of Cincinnati, she certainly was no stranger to athleticism. But in her post-college athletic training, she found traditional training methods both boring and uninspiring. The same could be said for one of her training partner at CrossFit Atlanta, [Dr. Ken Gall](#), a professor of mechanical engineering at Georgia Tech. Ms. Polaski and Dr. Gall comprised half of a foursome from CrossFit Atlanta that placed 8th in the team competition at the 2010 Games.

"I was a college athlete, and after about 15 years off I am finally back to a competitive environment which is keeping me in good shape. It feels like being an athlete again", said Dr. Gall.

### *Understanding the Diet of CrossFit*

Dining out with a group of CrossFit athletes, you will most definitely hear the word 'Paleo' at least multiple times. Reach for a piece of bread and they'll look at you like you have 3 eyes.

what is the Paleo diet? Ms. Polaski summed it up. "You eat lean meats, vegetables, nuts, seeds, some fruit, little starch and no sugar. Nothing processed. The focus is on fresh high quality foods, and preferably seasonal



foods. If you could hunt or gather it, you can eat it.”

And the reasoning behind the diet according to Dr. Gall, “The basic idea is that *processed food* is great for storage, transportation, and shelf life...but not so good for your body. By avoiding processed foods like pasta, bread, and cereal, you can remain leaner and lighter...faster and stronger. Oh, and you look better too.”

*Discipline and Intensity are Staples of the CrossFit Athlete and Attractive Brand Characteristics for Reebok*

It's my sense that the reason Reebok embraced the sport is because it's athletes embody 2 characteristics that have considerable marketing panache and resonance.

### **Discipline and intensity.**

When you watch these athletes compete, it **fires up spectators** and makes them consider alternate forms of training in their own personal fitness regimens.

“The beauty of the programming is that it is universally scalable”, said Ms. Polaski. “Meaning the movements can be modified to anyone's abilities and to overcome limitations. The only thing someone must have is the willingness and desire to work hard and to push themselves. The reason this program is so much more effective than others is its intensity, but intensity is not comfortable. It's very individual, but if you stick to it you will see results.”

### *Enhanced Buzz for the 2011 Games*

Aside from the afore-mentioned financial enhancements, Mr. Castro expressed a heightened sense of exposure and buzz leading up to the 2011 Games largely thanks to Reebok's involvement. “We have top CrossFit athletes on national commercials for Reebok. Charles Barkely talking about his CrossFit workouts during the halftime shows of NBA playoff games, Chad Ochocinco twittering about his CrossFit workouts while various other NFL players talk about their CrossFit experiences. And The Games were also featured in ESPN the Magazine.”

The growth in the sport itself, according to Mr. Castro, is reflected in how the qualification process has evolved in a few short years. “2007 was the first year of the event and we did not even have a qualification process. 70 total athletes registered. **Our numbers tripled in 2008**, causing us to depart from open registration and move towards a qualification system. We had Regionals in 2009 and then added another layer of qualifications in 2010. 30 sectionals and 15 regionals across the world.”

And just from 2010 and 2011, the growth was astounding. Mr. Castro said, “In 2011 we took the first round of qualifications online to help streamline the process. The demand has been unreal. We had 4,500 people compete in the process in 2010. In 2011 we had 29,000 people enter the Open, including people from **all continents and over 100 countries including China and India.**”

With this level of growth, both financially and in terms of participation and

exposure, expect CrossFit's exponential rise to continue in the near future. With a brand name like Reebok backing them both in spirit and in finances, the sky is truly the limit.

Last year less than a week after the 2010 Games, I wrote that CrossFit was an investment opportunity in the making...and Reebok made it happen just a few short months later.

The next step is television. Though streaming this year on ESPN3, I would not be surprised in the least to see ESPN, Fox, or [Comcast](#)-NBC add the Reebok CrossFit Games as part of their primary summer sports inventory by the 2012 Games.

On its own merits, the sport has the speed, strength, intensity and sex appeal to drive solid TV ratings, especially against soft competition during the summer sports calendar that really only features baseball.

But with Reebok aboard, it gives the sport that added level of commercial acceptance and legitimacy that networks are comforted by when analyzing what will drive ratings.

=====

*Dr. Patrick Rishe is an Associate Professor of Economics at the Walker School of Business at Webster University in St Louis, as well as Director of Sportsimpacts.*

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**This article is available online at:**  
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/sportsmoney/2011/07/22/crossfits-relationship-with-reebok-enhances-its-financial-and-commercial-credibility/>



# Moving Roxy Forward

Steps towards reconnecting with consumer base and how "talking story" can move the image of women's surfing "Beyond Gidget."



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## BEYOND GIDGET - THE SURF BODY POLITIC

1

09:07 6th February 2013 By Anna Langer

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# BEYOND GIDGET

With not much longer to go now until the first stop of the ASP Women's World Tour (the Beachley Classics are currently still TBA on [their website](#)) and inspired by an interesting experience on [Why Women's Surfing is in the Deep End](#), we found it perfect timing to spark up the debate on the image of the female surfer again, that we started with [Cori Schumacher's](#) piece in our [August/September mag](#) last year. Do you think she's right?

Words by Cori Schumacher, illustration by Eve Bracewell

“ The image that has been manufactured and recycled by the surf industry is one that is narrowly defined – despite multiple generations of women participating in surfing. ”

Research shows that women are more likely to buy from brands that use a mix of different body shapes in their ads yet the 1960s Gidget surf girl stereotype persists. Why is that and why does it matter?

The mainstream surf industry has grown from humble backyard beginnings to a billion dollar, global industry centred around an active beach lifestyle. The image that has been manufactured and recycled by the surf industry of the feminine



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side of this lifestyle is one that is narrowly defined, despite multiple generations of women participating in surfing. What, if anything, has changed about this image since the prototypical surfer girl made her debut in the 1959 Hollywood movie *Gidget*? And are we heading in the right direction?

There have been myriad types and styles of female surfer dating back to the wahines surfing in Hawaii before the arrival of Captain James Cook in 1778. Despite this diversity, the narrowly defined, constricting Gidget-image of the female surfer (young, white, thin, blonde, bikini-clad, boy-crazy, heterosexual) has been recycled over generations by the surf industry. The beach backdrop of the Hollywood movie, Southern California's Malibu, was "the exact spot on earth where ancient surfing became modern surfing," according to surf journalist Paul Gross. It was during this era, at this spot, and as a direct consequence of the Hollywood movie that the surf industry had its own beginnings. The Gidget-image is the very image that gave birth to the surf industry as a whole, which may explain the industry's loyalty to this image. This is particularly unfortunate for the surf industry given a recent study by Ben Barry [a Canadian women's health advocate who runs an model agency that specialises in diverse shapes and sizes] who found that women's purchase intentions increase up to 300 per cent when exposed to diverse body styles and types in advertising.

“ *The Gidget-image is the very image that gave birth to the surf industry as a whole, which may explain the industry's loyalty to this image.* ”



Recently, the California Gidget-image has taken a turn towards the overtly sexual. This comes after a decade of female surfers who embraced their strength and pushed the level of the competitive sport beyond the meagre recognition and salaries of the 1980s. Once again, it was the image of the female surfer that launched an economic burst for the industry as a whole through the 1990s. Lisa Andersen, the iconic "Roxy girl", captured the attention and admiration of a generation of would-be female surfers along with the incredible success of the women's boardshort in 1996. This shift ignited a wildfire of all-girl surf schools, girl surf movies, and female surf lifestyle clothing lines across surf brands. Not to mention magazines such as this one. This paralleled a shift in mainstream corporate America as niche markets (like the female athlete) were targeted in advertising. All of a sudden it was perfectly acceptable to be a female athlete. Women's surfing was progressing, but the image of the prototypical female surfer remained nearly identical to that of the 1950s. Only the fashion had changed. As



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7 REASONS YOU



the generation of female surfers that saw this shift “aged out” of the tour (decided to call it quits or in some cases lost sponsors), a new generation of female surfers slid into view.

“ *The trend to an overtly sexual image is not simply about titillating the male gaze. It is symptomatic of how both men and women in surfing view a narrowly defined “femininity” as tied inextricably to the way one looks versus what one does.* ”

One of the major distinguishing features of this new generation of female surfers is how “sexy” and “bang-able” they are. The California image of the surfer girl remains the dominant image, yet is now being celebrated for showing skin in ever more suggestive poses. The ubiquitous bikini (female surfing’s sports uniform) became a marker of femininity and heterosexuality in the 1990s, but simply wearing it is no longer enough to satisfy the new feminine ideal. Now one must wear an even skimpier bikini and suggestively flirt with the camera/audience. Even the most anticipated all-female surf movie of 2011, Nike’s *Leave a Message*, though filled with mind-blowing surfing, included shots of the ladies wrestling in the sand in their bikinis and throwing searing “come get me” glances over their shoulders. This trend is not simply about titillating the male gaze. It is symptomatic of how both men and women in surfing view a narrowly defined “femininity” as tied inextricably to the way one looks versus what one does. In a line-up, it is difficult to see who is male and who is female, even more so now that the girls are ripping “like boys”. The newest fashioning of the female surfer image is a further attempt at alleviating a persistent gender anxiety found in surfing.

So what are we to make of this sexy new trend? A trend, incidentally, being paralleled in the larger culture. The key questions to ask when analysing the newest version of the old Gidget-image are: 1) *Does sexualising female surfers benefit women’s professional surfing in general?* 2) *How does sexualising female surfers impact surf culture?*

First, it is important to note that each female surfer is her own woman, making her own choices, based on her own experiences. That said, there are overlapping trends among many female surfing professionals (the role models of female surfing) who are making personal choices that have far-reaching consequences. These consequences are what we are concerned about, specifically how this trend is benefiting the current ability of all professional female surfers to showcase their surfing

abilities at top-level locations, in great conditions, in an environment that respects them, pays them well, and treats them with dignity. It would be easy to point to the few individuals who are making more money in sponsorships than at any other point in history as a sign that “the girls are doing alright”, but the exceptions are not indicative of the overall health of professional surfing. A few women may get paid top dollar but the rest are left to scramble for meagre hand-outs.



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“ *Despite women’s surfing gaining relevance, respect, and exposure over the last 20 years, women’s surf events are being held in often poor conditions, with nearly half the events than in years past.* ”

Despite women’s surfing gaining relevance, respect, and exposure over the last 20 years, women’s surf events are being held in often poor conditions, with nearly half the events than in years past. Even more frustrating is the fact that surf periodicals continue to trivialise the female surfer, asking questions in interviews like “Is it difficult to surf with boobs?” or “Do you worry about sharks while on your period?” or running features like “*Waves are Women: Please no red tides.*”

The second question revolves around the impact the current sexualising trend has on surf culture, specifically, the youth. The American Psychiatrists Association reported on the effects of such trends in 2010 (The Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls can be found in its entirety online). Among the many results found within the report (ranging from the effects of sexualisation on the mental, emotional, sexual, and physical landscapes of boys, men, women, and society as a whole), were studies that linked sexualisation with three of the most common mental health problems of girls and women: eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression or depressed mood. These states of body anxiety affect performance in a tangible way. In one relevant study, college students were asked to try on and evaluate either a swimsuit or a sweater. While they waited for 10 minutes in a dressing room wearing the garment, they were asked to complete a maths test. The results revealed that young women in swimsuits performed significantly worse on the math problems than did those wearing sweaters. No differences were found for young men. Thinking about the body, the study concluded, and comparing it to cultural ideals detrimentally fragments the attention of women.

“ *Thinking about the body and comparing it to cultural ideals detrimentally fragments the attention of women.* ”

Surfing itself, as with many other physical activities, can be a safe space for many women and girls where they can escape from these sexualising trends in the larger culture. However, if these trends are allowed to penetrate and persist, or are even encouraged in surf culture, women and girls lose an important means to combat a real danger to their wellbeing. The implication here is that surfing can be a genuinely empowering activity (vs. a false empowerment that relies on external attention and rewards), if it is not accompanied by the sexualisation of the female surfer body.

The women in Ben Barry’s study commented that what inspires them most in representations of women is “glamour, artistry, and creativity.” Rather than focusing on the female surfer’s “bang-ability”, surf marketing ought to listen to what actually inspires women, instead of perpetuating an image that aggravates gender and body anxiety.

“ *Surfing can be a genuinely empowering activity (vs. a false empowerment that relies on external attention and rewards), if it is not accompanied by the sexualisation of the female surfer body.* ”