

Integrated Marketing Communication Campaign

“This Girl Can” – Sport England

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28 November 2016

This Girl Can – Part I

The organization behind the “This Girl Can” Campaign is Sport England. Sport England is the brand name for the English Sports Council, and is a government operation in the United Kingdom. Sport England was founded in January 1997 by the Royal Charter. It was originally called the UK Sports Council (About Us 2016). It was designed to distribute funding to different sport organizations through lottery funding. Lottery funding just means that the organizations received their donations and funding through a lottery system monitored by Sport England (Lottery Funding Definition 1). The funding plan for the years 2013 through 2017 was budgeted to be almost £4,000,000 (Funding 2016). Sport England is interesting as a government body because of the fact that it uses lottery funding. Also, unlike other organizations that run IMC Campaigns, Sport England does not have any shareholders. Instead, Sport England has citizens to take care of and individual sport organizations to fund. Lastly, Sport England was involved in the 2012 London Olympics, which is an interesting fact (About Us 2016). However, because of the fact that it is a government body for the people of England, Sport England does not have much of a global scope or reach. Instead they are just focused on helping the people of the UK get active.

The very first line on the webpage for the “This Girl Can” says, “Our research reveals a huge difference in the number of men and women playing sport. And it's not because females don't want to get active. Millions of women and girls are afraid to exercise because of fear of judgement,” (This Girl Can 2016). This is the reason behind this campaign. Typically, women are just not as confident when it comes to exercising when they grow older. This is because women are not represented properly in most fitness ads. Most of the ads feature women who are fitness models, and their careers revolve around how they look. It is practically impossible for the average woman to achieve the appearance of a fitness model, so they are discouraged from getting active, even though seventy-five percent had said they wanted to do more (Home 2016). To help combat this, Sport England’s “This Girl Can” Campaign featured women who are more representative of the UK’s population. The Campaign webpage goes on to say, “It seeks to tell the real story of women who play sport by using images that are the complete opposite of the idealised and stylised images of women we are now used to seeing,” (This Girl Can 2016). This helped erase some of the fear of judgment that women deal with.

This campaign has four key publics. They are employees, citizens, National Governing Bodies, and the overall government. Firstly, the employees are the most important public. The employees in this situation would be the government employees who work and maintain the funds that Sport England gives out. They also help the organization grow, and find even more employees to train and become part of the team. The campaign also requires the full support of Sport England’s employees and staff to really help it grow and increase the amount of women involved.

Secondly, the next key public is the citizens of the UK, especially the women. They are all directly affected by this campaign as well as all the work that Sport England does. By making sure to reach out to the citizens and female population, they increase the effectiveness of the campaign. Citizens are attracted to getting involved if they are informed and if the programs are well maintained. This means that the work Sport England does to maintain the fields and fund the programs is key to keeping the citizens active. Also, this particular campaign reached out to women through ads, commercials, and even a short film.

Something that other organizations do not have are the National Governing Bodies of sport. In this situation, each National Governing Body, or NGB, maintains an individual sport (National Governing Bodies 2016). Sport England oversees each of the National Governing Bodies, and gives them the funding that they need. Here, by including the National Governing Bodies in this campaign, each NGB can make sure that women are included in their sports.

Lastly, the overall government of the United Kingdom is a key public. The government is coming up with the funds, and is the head of Sport England. If the campaigns that Sport England comes up with fail or don't create enough of an effect, then the government is less likely to invest as much into the funds and programs. Therefore, it is important for Sport England to keep the government in the loop of what's going on.

As previously mentioned, the "This Girl Can" Campaign was designed to encourage average women to get active and join recreational sports. IMC Campaigns are designed to create a "new reality," (Grasso 2016). In this instance, the "new reality" is one where women who don't look like fitness models or are amazing athletes can be active and try new things without feeling judgment from others. They did this by using real women and creating ads and the short film, *This Girl Can*, that over thirty-seven million people have watched.

The campaign created awareness to the fact that women don't feel comfortable putting themselves out there and trying new methods of getting active. It went on to educate their key publics that women are feeling this way, and to educate women that they are not alone. Sport England improved on brand favorability by making a point to include a new group of the population and use women that represented the real population. Although Sport England wouldn't increase revenue or market shares, it could definitely increase the amount of women involved in the programs that Sport England offer, and possibly even create new programs. The campaign used traditional poster ads and commercials. The ads used phrases that were a little edgy and asserted dominance, driving home the point that women are tired of being judged. There is even a blog-like website that has testimonials, lists of activities, and even an app to make your own "This Girl Can" poster (Home 2016).

The campaign encouraged 1.6 million women to get active (Kemp 2016). Overall, this campaign was very well received and considerably successful. It is still an active

campaign today. As of May 2016, there had been over 660,000 tweets with #ThisGirlCan, over 500,000 members of the social media community, over 8,000 supporters of the campaign (Kemp 2016). The campaign has done good work, and will continue to encourage women in the United Kingdom to go out and get active.

This Girl Can – Part II

The “This Girl Can” campaign by Sport England was focused on increasing the amount of women signed up to be involved in sports nationally. Sport England had discovered a large gap between the amount of women and men from ages fourteen to forty that were signed up to play recreational sports (This Girl Can 2016). As a result, there were less sport opportunities for women to get involved in. Sport England decided to rectify this situation and created the “This Girl Can” campaign. The campaign aims to make women more confident in themselves, and therefore more involved in recreational physical activities.

The main method of promotion for the “This Girl Can” campaign was through social media. There were banner ads featuring average, typical women working out and getting sweaty. The ads had catchy phrases written on them, like “I jiggle, therefore I am,” and “I’m slow but I’m lapping everyone on the couch,” (Marketing Document 2016). These were prominent on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. The campaign even developed the hashtag #ThisGirlCan so that women internationally could post about things that the campaign inspired them to do or try. The hashtag was used on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Vine, YouTube and even Google+ (Hall 2015). Several different magazines and newspapers such as *The Independent*, BBC, *The Huffington Post*, and *The Telegraph* went on to write articles about how great the “This Girl Can” campaign was and how women were really impressed with it (Vanner 2015). There was even a press conference, the “‘This Girl Can’ Conference” on August 5, 2015. The campaign then created many social media accounts as well as a website.

The “This Girl Can” campaign is a non-profit campaign run by Sport England, which is the United Kingdom’s governmental branch that handles sponsoring public sports (About Us 2016). So, there wasn’t exactly a product or service that they were trying to market. As a result, they did not have very many or very creative marketing strategies. As mentioned in the Public Relations section, “This Girl Can” was heavily promoted on social media. This was almost all of the outreach. Also, Sport England was the closest thing that the campaign had to a sponsor. There was one clothing company, Marks & Spencer, that has made plans to collaborate with the campaign (Chalhal 2016). “This Girl Can” has also started to consider becoming a real brand, but has to consider that it is part of the government. As of 2016, there have been over seventy-seven hundred partners, such as the BBC, who have signed up to to work with the campaign (*This Girl Can* 2016). Some have commented that the marketing strategy was similar to that of Dove – real women and short films (Hall 2015).

As for advertising, “This Girl Can” uses mostly film ads. These ads are on television, but mostly they are online. YouTube ads received the most traffic, but the ads pop up in other websites as well. The campaign even went on to create a ninety second film called “This Girl Can” to bring awareness. This was incredibly successful, and is how the campaign got the most attention. Also, even though “This Girl Can” doesn’t have an official “spokesperson,” there has been some support given from prominent people. Firstly, Missy Elliot allowed for her song, “Get Ur Freak On” to be

used in the ads. She then went on to tweet about the campaign and promoted it (Hall 2015). Secondly, the Herts Sports Partnership in the United Kingdom worked with the campaign to increase the amount of women involved in sports (HSP 2016). Lastly, the British Equestrian Team spoke publicly about how much they like the campaign and that they also want to encourage more women to get out and be active (Best PR 2015).

The “This Girl Can” campaign has been incredibly successful. The campaign had two goals: to inspire women to exercise, and to reach as many people as possible. The campaign quickly became incredibly popular, and was spread around the world. This was achieved through social media. As previously mentioned, there were several different ads as well as a ninety-second short film that were created to promote the campaign. Within three months, “This Girl Can” gained over one hundred and thirty thousand Facebook “likes,” forty-two thousand Twitter followers, and five thousand Instagram followers. The film was also viewed over thirteen million times on YouTube. Overall, this was a social media reach of over twenty-three million (Vanner 2015). The fame on social media has had drawn the attention of others. As previously mentioned, news sources such as BBC, *Huffington Post*, *The Independent*, and countless others have written about or featured the “This Girl Can” campaign.

As for getting women involved, there have been positive results here, too. In one year, 2.8 million women have either started exercising or increased their activity levels (*This Girl Can* 2016). For just one year, this is an incredible amount of women to turn out. This also shows that the campaign was effective when it came to reducing the amount of judgment that women felt when they increased activity levels. One woman even got a “This Girl Can” tattoo! Other athletic brands have taken notice of the success of the “This Girl Can” campaign. Nike even went on to create an ad campaign called “Better For It” that focused on average people instead of the usually super-athletic market (*This Girl Can* 2016).

When it comes to awards, the campaign has not been overlooked, either. In 2015, the “This Girl Can” campaign and Sport England were awarded the Glass Lion: The Lion for Change award at the Cannes International Festival of Creativity (Vanner 2016). There was also a thorough marketing plan and update created for the Marketing Society Awards 2016 (*This Girl Can* 2016). This has given Sport England the drive it needs to keep pushing and encouraging women to get active.

The CEO of Sport England, Jennie Price, the ad director, Kim Gehrig, and Sport England’s director of Business Partnerships, Tanya Joseph, and many others have all released statements about the success of the campaign, and these will be included on the next page. Tanya Joseph noted that the campaign’s success allowed them to come up with a new strategy, which is to start to include more diverse groups that still may feel that their voices aren’t heard in the sport department. Overall, the “This Girl Can” campaign is one of the most successful athletic campaigns to date. It has encouraged women to take pride in their abilities and take charge of their athletic health and community activities. Sport England has done an incredible job, but still has a long way to go.

Quotes and Comments

“It is time to spread the message that horses don’t care if you wiggle, jiggle or pant your way around an arena; instead you’ll find a willing exercise partner and friend who will help you to double the sweat. Get involved by posting your glowing post-ride pictures, your beautiful hat hair and photos of your group rides on Facebook and Twitter, and don’t forget to use the hashtag #thisgirlcan.” – British Equestrian Team (Highlight PR)

“Any woman will tell you about the internal dialog that goes on in her head, particularly when she thinks about sport, exercise and getting fit. It’s stuff like ‘I’m too fat to do this’ or ‘I’m not fit enough to go to that class’, or ‘If I get on that treadmill and press that button and fall off, I’m going to look really stupid and everybody is going to stare at me, and I’m certainly not going to wear those clothes to do it’. We are trying to say it’s perfectly normal to feel like that, don’t beat yourself up about it.” – Sport England CEO Jennie Price (Marketing Land)

“I wanted to make the first advert that ever celebrated cellulite. You never get campaigns like this. They don’t exist. Women are usually spoken to through beauty or fashion, it’s very rare that they are spoken to as human beings.” – Ad’s Director Kim Gehrig (Marketing Land)

“The campaign has changed the written and visual language around exercise, painting a uniquely realistic picture of active women, each with a highly aspirational ‘don’t give a damn’ attitude. This has struck a chord with women the world over, inspiring them with the confidence to be more active.” – Sharon Jiggins, managing director of FCB Inferno (Digital Radish)

“We need to focus more on what the consumer wants rather than saying, ‘this is what we do.’ To have a bit of courage, to work with different partners, and work differently, has been a big change and in government they have welcomed that approach.” – Tanya Joseph, Sport England’s Director of Business Partnerships (Marketing Week)

Resources

Sport England – About Us	Basic information about Sport England and what they do
Sport England – Funding	The way that Sport England gives out government funding and how the Lottery Funding worked
CampaignLive.co.uk – How “This girl can”...	Information about the marketing strategy
Oxford Dictionary – Lottery Funding	The definition of Lottery Funding
Sport England – National Governing Bodies	More information about the functions of Sport England
This Girl Can – Home	Description about the campaign
Sport England – This Girl Can	“This Girl Can” information from the Sport England’s point of view
Digital Radish – “This Girl Can” marketing campaign	Information about the other organizations reporting about it
Marketing Society Awards – This Girl Can	A comprehensive, up-to-date marketing plan created by the campaign to highlight what they have achieved and how they did it
Highlight PR – Campaign of the Month	Awarded the campaign as Campaign of the Month and included a statement from the Equestrian Team
Marketing Week – This Girl Can Success	The work of Tanya Joseph and her future plans for the “This Girl Can” campaign in 2016
Marketing Land - #ThisGirlCan Campaign	Mostly quotes from those involved in the campaign.
Herts Sports Partnership – This Girl Can	About the partnership between the Herts Sports and “This Girl Can”

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