Underrepresentation of Women in Sports Media Impacts Their
Social Media Marketability

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Background

Contributions to literature:
- Researching the consequences of this underrepresentation on the marketability and fan-base of women athletes
- Linking the underrepresentation of women athletes to their effectiveness in Instagram marketing.
  - Previous research focused on extent of underrepresentation -- only represented in 4% of sports media content despite being 40% of sports participants (Cooky et al., 2015).
  - Women's content presented as as "less exciting, less important, less valued" (Cooky et al. 2013).
- Through complementing the Sports Innovation Lab's Fan Project Report:
 - Proving that women's sports have an equally profitable future to men's sports.

Research Question

RQ 1: How does the inequality in sports media representation affect **the status of female and male role models** in sports?

- H: Women athletes are underrepresented, therefore, less known as role models, therefore their fans have less incentives for consumption.

RQ 2: How is the marketability of women athletes on social media impacted by their lack of visibility?

- H2: Having less visibility in sports media makes women athletes less recognizable and therefore less effective in marketing of sports goods.
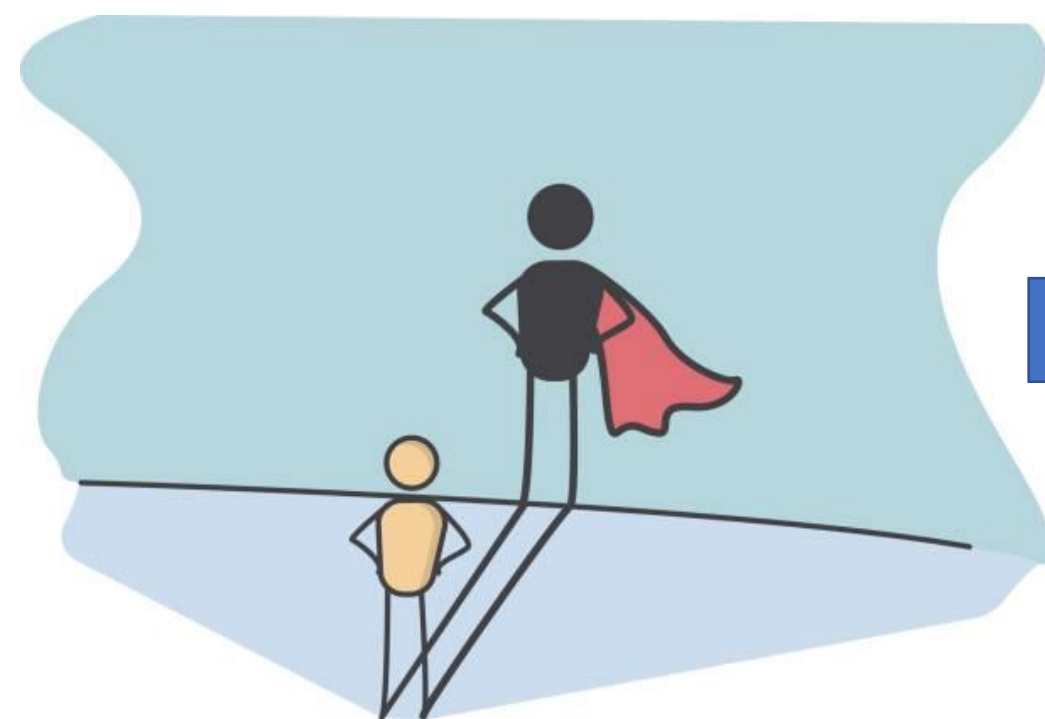
Results

*ONE.* Fans of women's sports place a **20% higher importance on role model**s.

TWO. Fans of women's sports **watch their role model play 22% less** frequently than fans of male sports due to the underrepresentation of women's sports.

THREE. Fans of women's sports use more **modern platforms to consume sports**.

RESULT? Fan's of Women's Sports are more technologically savvy. They found it **only 10% harder to consume sports content**, even though women athletes only get 4% of sports coverage.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Approach
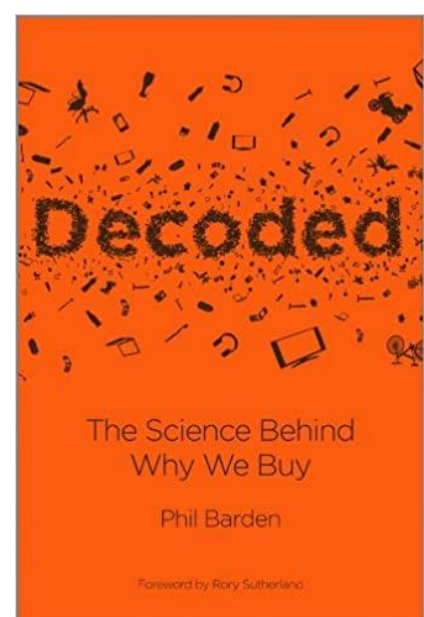
- Survey investigating the status of women-athlete role models in sports & the impact of role models on consumption.
- Data analysis determining the impact of underrepresentation on Instagram following and marketability of women athletes
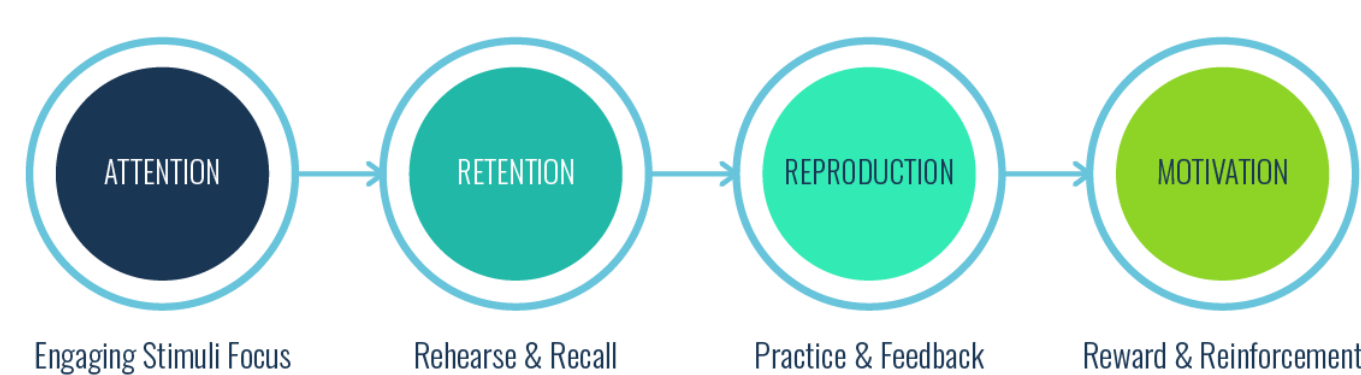
VOICE IN SPORT

Pt.1 Survey

- Investigates link between representation and the development of role models in women's sports.
- Anonymous, distributed through Social Media and Voice in Sport
  - ≈ 200 respondents
- Separates respondents into fans of women's sports and fans of men's sports to contrast their consumption and role model patterns

Role Models & Visibility Matter!

SOCIAL MEDIA REFLECTS TRENDS OF UNDERREPRESENTATION

Ranking of inequality: (women's likes as % of men's)

1.BASKETBALL	2. SOCCER	3. RUNNING	4. GENERAL
43%	44%	57%	69%

HOWEVER...
- Most unequal sports has faster growth rates for women's posts than for men's posts.
  - Stagnant follower base versus potential base of followers.

= Start-Up Phase of Women's Sports & Big Potential of Increasing Investment Returns!

Theory

Social Learning Theory

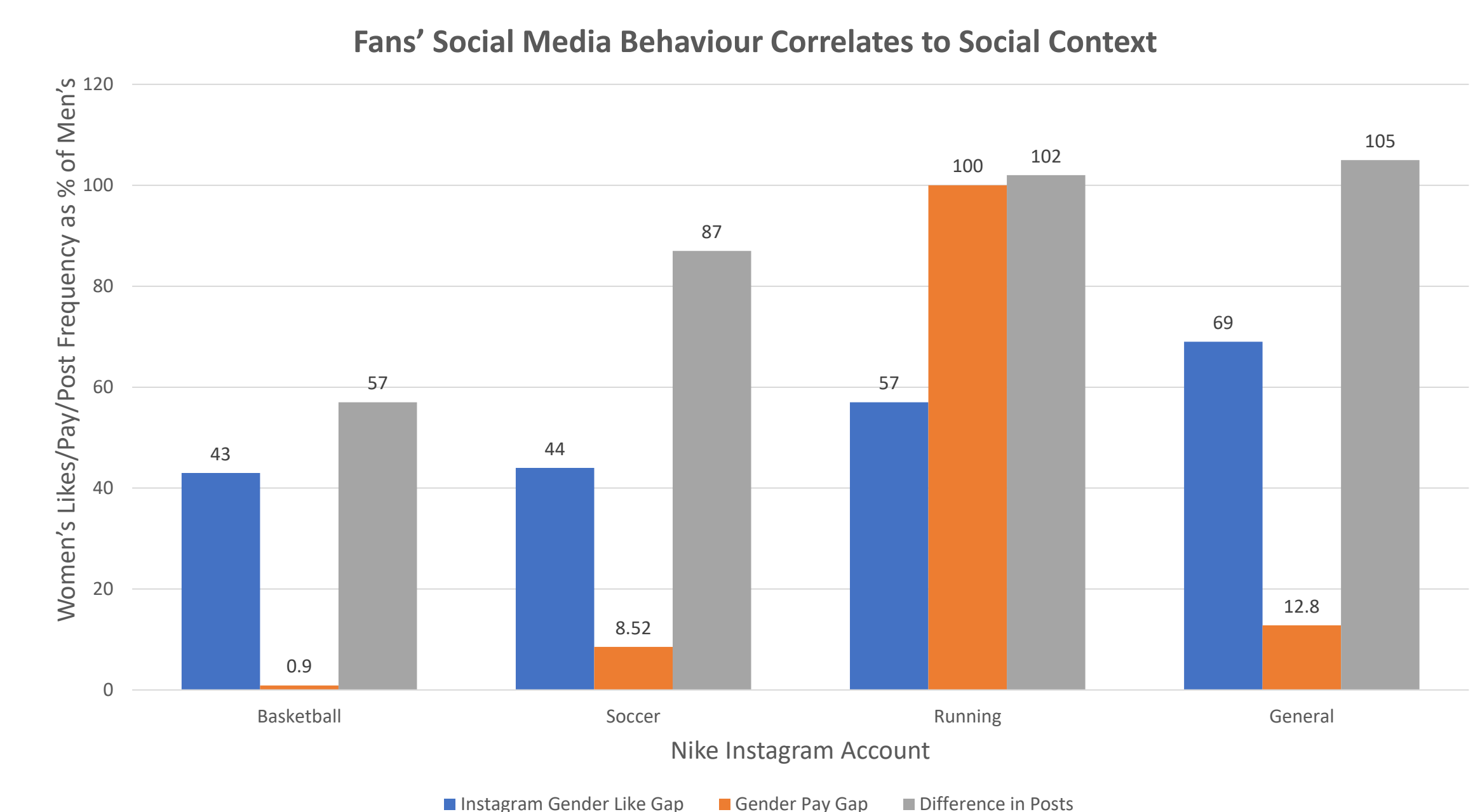| ATTENTION	RETENTION	REPRODUCTION	MOTIVATION
Engaging Stimuli Focus	Rehearse & Recall	Practice & Feedback	Reward & Reinforcement

- Social Impact Theory
  - How do sports role models influence their fans?
- System 1 & System 2 Thinking
- How are consumption decisions made on social media and in real life?

SYSTEM 1
Intuition & instinct

95%
Unconscious
Fast
Associative
Automatic pilot

SYSTEM 2
Rational thinking

5%
Takes effort
Slow
Logical
Lazy
Indecisive

Source: Daniel Kahneman

Pt.2 Instagram Data Analysis

- Investigates the link between invisibility of women athletes & their marketability on social media
- Nike: global, developed social media presence.
- Contrasting number of likes and frequency of posts with men's faces versus posts with women's faces
  - Last 150 posts (back to 2016-18) on: Nike General, Nike Soccer, Nike Running and Nike Basketball
- Impact of social context on fans' engagement with female and male athletes on social media.