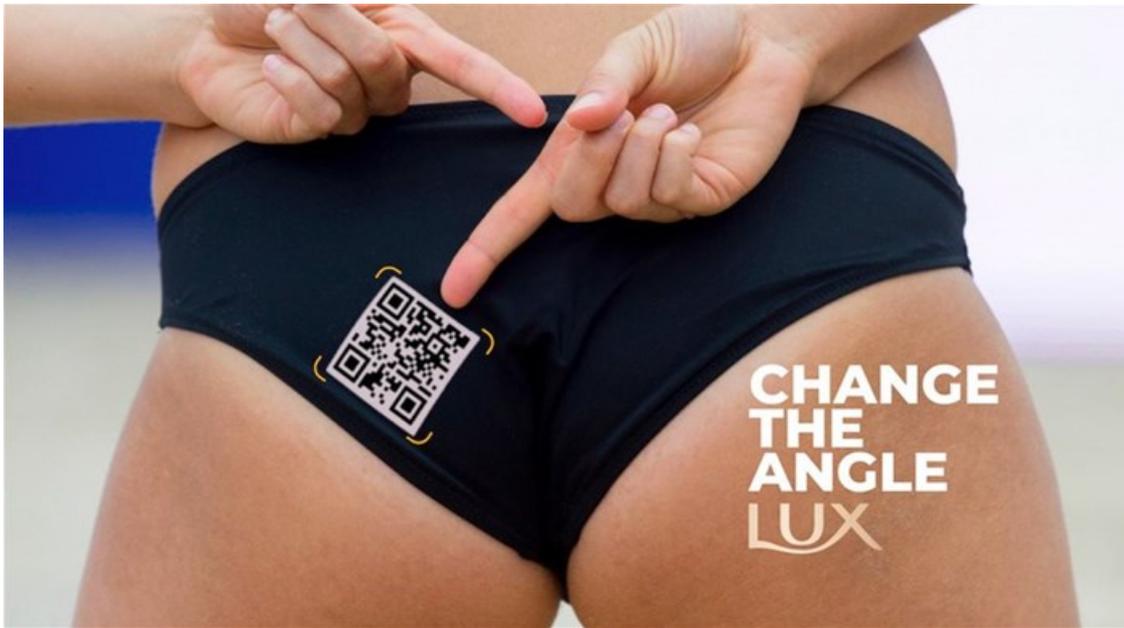


Beauty brand Lux challenges sports media to 'Change the Angle' towards female athletes

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QR code initiative made by Wunderman Thompson highlights sexism in sports coverage - and calls for focus on achievements, not physical attributes.



While the growing global popularity of professional and amateur female sports is something to celebrate, much of the media coverage of women athletes in competition still misses the mark, quite literally – focusing too often on female anatomy rather than sporting achievements through invasive angles and excessive close-up shots which can potentially devalue the empowerment that sports bring to participants.

As a beauty brand that aims to support women against everyday sexism, Unilever's beauty brand Lux wants to raise awareness of the issue and start a conversation with broadcasters and audiences to encourage them to 'Change the Angle'. Working closely with Wunderman Thompson Singapore and Wunderman Thompson South Africa, Lux teamed up with Volleyball SA (South Africa) and sports broadcaster SABC on a bold new initiative in which they hacked a live tournament by highlighting potentially sexist camera angles – and in so doing, flipping the male gaze back on itself. The initiative is also supported by a host of top female athletes, sports commentators and officials.

"Lux has been fighting against everyday sexism for years now," says Qondisa Ngwenya, MD of Wunderman Thompson's specialist sports and sponsorship arm. "Our responsibility as a partner to Lux is to challenge how things have been done, the unconscious bias that creeps into the media and marketing landscape, and the sporting world has been an important place to start. As a marketing business, we have a role to play in how millions and millions of people watching sports events are influenced. There's so much talent, energy, and positive impact female athletes convey; we want to work with brand partners to focus on that!"

Organised under the auspices of the South African Volleyball Association, the Durban Open Women's Beach Volleyball took place on 15 and 16 April in Durban, where 16 different teams of South Africa's top women beach volleyball athletes participated. This was broadcast live by SABC, reaching an estimated audience of 19.7 million in South Africa. As part of the 'Change the Angle' initiative, female players wore QR codes on their bodies – the same areas sports broadcasters tend to focus on.

When scanned, the code directs the viewer to a film made by Lux, where leading sportswomen call on broadcasters and cameras to 'Change the Angle' of how female athletes are portrayed – by focusing on their strengths and aiming the lens at their sporting prowess, rather than their physical attributes. The video highlights shocking statistics regarding sexist sports coverage, including '2,500 pictures objectifying women reported at the 2021 Olympics'¹ and includes powerful statements from female athletes. It ends with six best practice tips for the media on how female athletes should be portrayed.

You can watch the film [here](#).



“Women in sports are ten times more likely to be objectified by camera angles that focus on certain body parts compared to their male counterparts. When we found out that this is also an issue for top female athletes who have achieved incredible things, we knew we had to act,” Severine Vauleon, Global Brand vice president of Lux, says. “This doesn't only devalue the female athletes' professional performance and achievements, but also perpetuates the objectification issue many women face every day. At Lux, we believe that beauty should be a source of strength and that the focus should be on celebrating the beauty of their strength, skills and achievements in sport.”

The choice of beach volleyball is a strategic one, as the sport suffers more than most from baked-in bias due to being played under hot conditions and in minimal clothing. But while beach volleyball may be one of the most obvious sports in terms of misdirected attention, the problem is a global one. As a result, key sports influencers, including cricket commentator Kass Naidoo, broadcaster and former national hockey player Unathi Kanyi, and Lux brand ambassador Zozibini Tunzi, have thrown their considerable online and real-world influence behind the campaign, helping to spread the QR code and its underlying message.

And the issue is not just confined to the sports arena. Objectification is a global issue – from film sets to the streets – and the vast majority of women globally have been subject to it at some point in their everyday lives. This is why the 'Change the Angle' campaign is only the first step in highlighting a much broader cause.

To that end, Lux has partnered with South African NGO Sonke Gender Justice to work towards helping women in South Africa to combat street harassment by affecting sustained behaviour change amongst men and boys. This partnership aims to change social norms that reinforce everyday sexism by training religious and community leaders, media personnel, teachers and student influencers to create communities that are safe spaces for women to express their beauty fully and authentically.

“Ultimately, our goal is to make people think about how female athletes – and women in general – are judged by appearances rather than performances. We want to show the world that focusing on women's bodies, rather than their abilities, is a form of sexism that needs to be challenged,” says Marco Versolato, CCO at Wunderman Thompson Singapore. “The 'Change the Angle' campaign website offers six simple guidelines to effect change in how female athletes are portrayed – and we hope that everyone who's keen to see change will spread the word.”

“This is a bold and powerful move for a beauty brand like Lux to take, and it makes me even prouder to be a part of the Lux family. I am hoping to see the change that we need in the sports fraternity so that women athletes are celebrated for the

amazing talent that they have rather than being objectified in a sexual manner. I encourage everyone to do what they can to participate and push media in South Africa and across the world to #Change the Angle,” Says Zozi Tunzi, former Miss Universe.

¹<https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1114387/joc-female-athletes-images-reported>

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