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## Something for the weekend

By Linda Anderson

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The benefits of sport, be it football, tennis or rowing, for example have long been acknowledged. Fresh air and exercise can lead to improved health. But **research** from a business and public policy professor at Wharton points to further advantages - playing sport can potentially lead to improved education and better job opportunities.

Using Title 1X - the 1972 education amendment to the US Civil Rights Act of 1964 which gave girls the same athletic opportunities at school as boys - Betsey Stevenson compared the outcomes for girls who were at school before Title 1X and those who went afterwards.

She has discovered that playing sport does have real benefits.

Prof Stevenson at the **Wharton school at the University of Pennsylvania** says that women who play sport have a greater chance of going to college and may also have a greater chance of entering previously male-dominated occupations.

Skills acquired whilst playing sport may subsequently be of use in the business world she adds, as sportsmen and women learn how to compete and play according to rules and procedures as well as playing as a team.

"The development of these skills could be especially important for girls who must try to manoeuvre their way through traditionally male occupations later in life," she says.

Sport can also improve the financial bottom line she adds, as there is improved remuneration in later life for those who take part in sport at high school. While she stresses it is not proof that a sporting background leads to a larger salary, because other factors need to be taken into consideration, nevertheless she says there are positive correlations.

Other research also considers the sexes this week. Are women more loyal than men and can this make a difference when it comes to consumer marketing?

Academics have discovered that while both sexes develop loyalty, how it is manifested differs between the two genders. Men tend to be loyal to a company or a brand, but women place most value on personal relationships with for example, a specific salesperson.

Marketing professor Stijn van Osselaer, one of the authors of the research, cites the example of clothing shops. Boutiques for women are often run by one or two individuals he says, which will allow female shoppers to develop a close relationship with the salesperson. However he adds it is rare to find a menswear shop staffed by one or two people.

Male consumers say the researchers, might be loyal to the shop, however not to the staff inside. And he adds that women's loyalty to a specific salesperson or hairdresser for example might be so great that if the salesperson leaves the company, the female customer may well follow.

These **findings** have implications for companies and their marketing strategies and how these strategies need to be tailored, the academics add, suggesting that companies should initiate a one-on-one marketing strategy when selling to women, treating female consumers as individuals.

The research was carried out by Prof van Osselaer from the **Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University** and co-authors Tammo Bijmolt, a professor of marketing research at the **University of Groningen** in the Netherlands and Valentyna Melnyk, senior lecturer at **Waikato Management School, University of Waikato**, New Zealand.