

# WHAT WOMEN WANT

WRITTEN BY MELISSA WIGGINS



NEW  
FUTURE  
VALUE™

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**You don't truly  
know a woman  
until you  
understand every  
word  
she is not saying  
to you.**

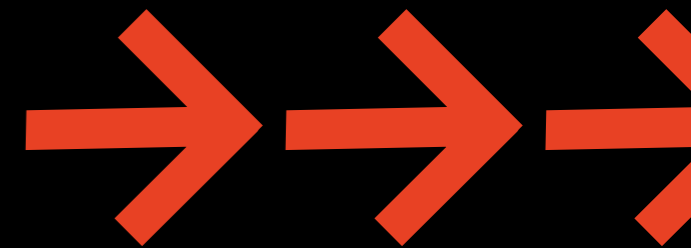
# PROBLEM

Sportswear brands have historically failed to understand and meet the needs of everyday women.

# SOLUTION

Listen. Learn. Innovate.

# HOW



Read on...



# WHY FOCUS ON

# ‘WHAT WOMEN WANT’?

I could answer that with a simple **‘why not!?!’**

The fact is, that this demographic has continued to mystify marketers and there’s really no reason for it.

This first edition of ‘The New Future Value Report’ draws upon valuable research from our partners at Mintel and combines that with further industry insights for a deep dive into the womens athleisurewear market.

Our intent is to inspire you with strategic insight and tactical excellence to help you to realise new future value.

Have a read and let us know what you think.

**Follow StrategiQ on LinkedIn.**  
**#newfuturevalue to join the conversation.**



**MELISSA WIGGINS**  
StrategiQ Marketing Strategist



# OPENING UP THE SPORTSWEAR FIELD



Women's sport has rapidly established its place and is starting to disrupt a historically male dominated market and inspire a new generation of everyday athletes.

With the field opening up, what are the opportunities for those in the market and where are the opportunities to innovate and differentiate?

This report takes a look at what this discerning audience demands and explores how to feed their appetite for bold new formats, experiences and media products.

# 67%

of female consumers in the UK say it is important for them to lead an active lifestyle.

# 58%

of UK consumers are more inclined to lead an active lifestyle with the support of their social or family circle.

# ON YOUR MARKS



# GIRLS AREN'T GUYS

They're less likely than men to simply buy because a sporting hero looks great in something. They look to identify with their story, so make sure you tell it, but keep it simple.

**Get your photography right**, we want authenticity and simplicity, we want to see your subject for who she is (we almost don't care where she is!). In the words of Assisi: 'when necessary, use words'.

**For women it's about the way activewear makes them feel.** They want comfort and confidence (and they don't really care how you do it!).

The majority aren't after stereotypical colours and patterns to look pretty.

**They're looking to feel strong and proud.**

If your marketing tells that story in a way that they can connect with, that's where the magic happens.





# DIVERSIFICATION

The active and leisurewear markets are on a rapid scale-up. The wellbeing quest is inspiring women everywhere to engage. The movement is diverse, which makes it ultra accessible. It's no longer solely the domain of sporting heroes, with the school run becoming just as valid as the 200 metres.

Featuring not only on track and field, but on catwalk, gym, park, highstreet and sofa, **activewear is a category on a massive growth curve.**

Mintel's Consumer 'Extend My Brand' and 'Relationship Renaissance' 2024 reports tracked trends to establish that there is an appetite for clothing retailers to become more moral brands that champion connection and are better informed about the needs of more culturally diverse consumers.

**This presents an opportunity to build culturally connected innovative brands** that form purposeful collaborations and fuel positive perspectives.

Looking at ways to extend your audience connection and provide supportive content (potentially utilising assistive technology) can help form a deeper and more meaningful brand affinity.



# 72%

of women are concerned about their sleep.

# 63%

of women worry about their nutrition.

# 50%

of women have stress management high on their agendas.



# WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?



**Arc'teryx** (outdoor equipment) initiated the 'No Wasted Days' campaign which highlights how Najwa found purpose, connection and community through the Muslim Hikers collective. The collective tackles racial hatred by welcoming people to enjoy exploring the outdoors together regardless of faith.



**Femfresh** have partnered with West Ham United Women to empower women to embrace and prioritise their intimate health and break the taboo. The campaign features a video of the team reinforcing these values.



**Holland & Barrett** have woken up to women, introducing a new wellness campaign 'Own Every Day of The Month' focused on providing accessible support around women's health concerns. They've taken a really innovative approach training over 600 staff as health coaches, launching a free nurse helpline and menstrual health video consultation service with the Endometriosis Foundation.





From representation of everyday bodies in advertising campaigns like Savage X Fenty, to body confident influencers modelling their brand, accessibility is key. The message that activewear is for every woman is central to success. Brands that are getting on board with this message are winning.

Dove and Nike have partnered up to launch **'Body Confident Sport'**, a body confidence campaign with a mission to make sports a place of belonging for girls. It's a smart move by Nike to piggyback on Dove's well established position as a body confident brand.

Their key messages include powerfully positioned prose like; **'Any body can be an athlete'**, **'Enjoyment over appearance'** and **'Unwanted attention is never her fault'** (a common experience of many women wearing activewear in public). The dynamic duo are diversifying Nikes audience reach, dispelling past perceptions of who 'could' wear the brand (other than on their feet!).

**These partnerships offer brands an ideal platform to align with consumers' preference for companies that promote fairness and share their values, particularly in the areas of ED&I.**

# BODY POSITIVE

**50%**

of millennials are concerned about their appearance.

**40%**

of UK consumers agree that there isn't enough body diversity in advertising.

**37%**

of UK social media users agree that social media use causes them to compare themselves to others.



## Women's sport is starting to see increasing investment and media attention.

You've only got to watch the media sensation 'Welcome to Wrexham' to see that celebrity owners Rob McElhenney and Ryan Reynolds have realised that investing in the women's game (Wrexham A.F.C Women) is absolutely strategic.

They've clearly earmarked the star profiles whose brands they're building, knowing that their relatability, social media presence and inspirational stories will gain them loyal followers and an addressable audience.

# 262 million

hours of viewing were recorded across the BBC and ITV coverage of Women's World Cup football.

# FLOODLIGHTS & FLOODGATES



# THE FEMALE FIGURE

↗ **14%**

market growth  
projected between  
**2024-2028**

**£32.2bn**

womenswear market size in **2023**.

Reaching

**£38.4bn**  
**in 2028.**



**HOW IT'S**

**DONE...**





# UNILEVER SCORES

Sponsorship of women's sports and their teams is another winning move in terms of brand positioning and public perception. Unilever are building their brand and creating lasting connections through sponsorship of 'the beautiful game'.

Their Personal Care brand is the proud sponsor of worldwide tournaments; FIFA World Cup™, UEFA EURO 2024™, CONMEBOL Copa América USA 2024™, and tournaments in the Confederation of African Football (CAF).



**'Over 2 billion people** watched the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™, which provides the opportunity of **"an emotional connection that lasts beyond a 90-minute game"**

**-Naria Hernandez-Crespo**, Unilever, Chief Marketing Officer

Unilever have also learnt to leverage content generation to go beyond a one-sided conversation enabling the brand to bring people together over a shared love and engage with consumers.

And before you think that women's football is just for women, there was a **41% increase in male viewers** of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ and **45% of the last FIFA Men's World Cup viewers were women.**



41%

increase in male viewers of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™.

47%

of the last FIFA Men's World Cup viewers were women.



# STRONG IS BEAUTIFUL

Luxury lingerie retailer Bluebella launched their **#StrongIsBeautiful** campaign ahead of the Paris Olympics.

The brand elected to partner with Team GB Rugby Sevens players Celia Quansah, Ellie Boatman and Jasmine Joyce on the campaign.

BLUEBELLA®

**We have to change the perception that the strong female form is not “feminine”. The idea that strength and femininity do not go together is a really damaging perception for keeping women in sport but also more broadly.’**

**Emily Bendell**, Bluebella CEO and Founder.

# STRONG IS BEAUTIFUL





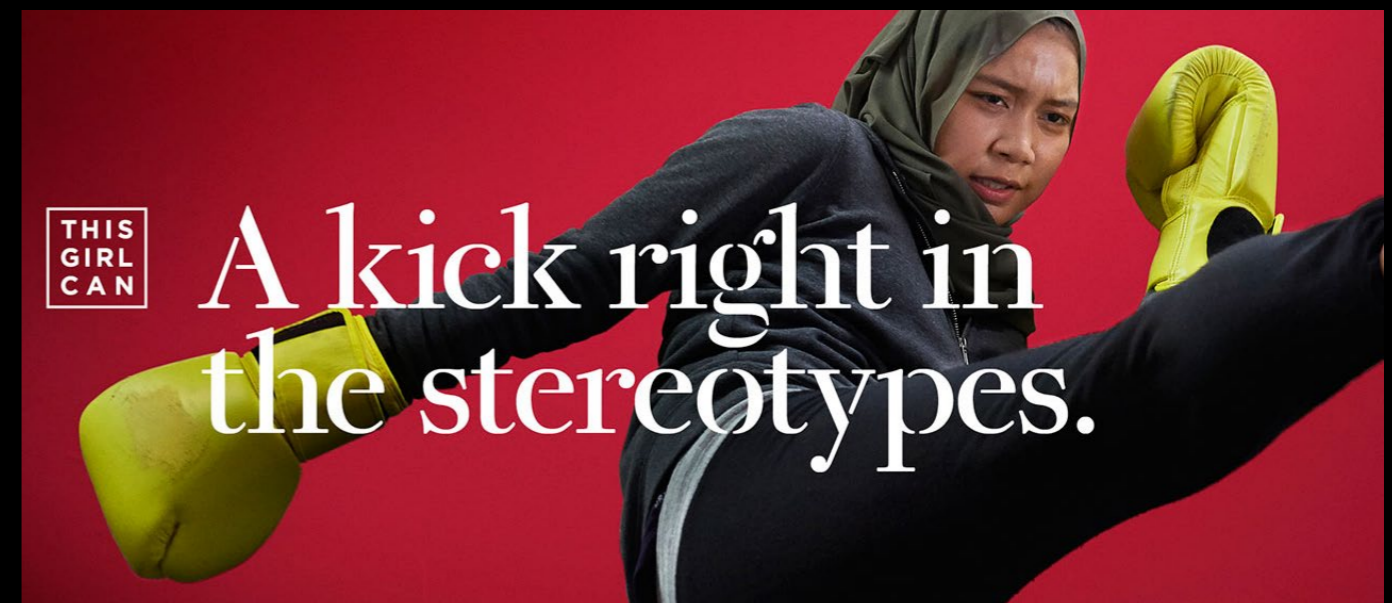
# JUST DO IT (OUTDOORS)?

Campaign to Protect Rural England research reported that women struggle to participate in outdoor fitness.

Sport England has partnered with Forestry England, Canal & River Trust and Ordnance Survey to launch 'This Girl Can', a campaign promoting experiences for women in natural spaces.

To support, they've provided a toolkit with design assets and guidance on both activity creation and connecting with a culturally diverse female audience with women from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Retailers and activewear companies have **real power** to champion change and take a more holistic approach to meeting the needs of their female audience.





# TALA, GRACE BEVERLEY, FOUNDER

Founder Entrepreneur Grace Beverley launched athleisure brand Tala in 2019, aged just 22, motivated by not being able to access the right clothing for her body shape. Having made her name as fitness influencer @GracefitUK, she'd already successfully founded Shreddy, 'the number 1 female fitness transformation app'.

Achieving **£6 million in its first year of sales**, Beverley chose to part ways with Tala's original licensor and manufacturing partner to pursue product innovation over being an 'influencer merch brand'. **'Being an influencer... wasn't what I wanted for my future or for the brand'.**

**Beverley's vision was for quality, comfortable, ethically sourced athletic wear at an affordable price point.**

Tala products are mostly manufactured from recycled and upcycled materials including organic cotton and Tencel and are mostly discretely branded, getting away from the 'merch brand' model.

## Credibility is key for Tala.

Whilst they value sustainability, they realised their performance fabric products couldn't live up to their ideal, so they do what they can, encouraging use of microplastic catching guppy bags to prevent water supply contamination. **'You have to create solutions at a mass market level that are better, not perfect, in order to be able to create change.'**

**With half of the UK demographic being an average size 16**, Tala saw the opportunity of plus-sizes which they launched up to 4XL across 72% of its styles in February 2023. The range has been gradually **developed based on the feedback of focus groups**, testing appetite for colours, shapes and styles to **avoid wastage.**

'Our market strategy starts from the solutions we provide with product.' and evolves based on feedback. This **problem/solution approach** is a consistent thread running throughout TALA's marketing giving a sense of a genuine and trustworthy brand.

Beverley stood firm against those who encouraged her to double the price to improve margins, prioritising her loyal customer base, providing items from as little as £30. That's probably why **50% of weekly orders are from returning customers.**

**'The (Tala) team is laser focused on the value equation of their products... that resonates so well with their (Gen Z and millennial) audience.'** Sasha Trower, partner at Tala investor Venrex.

Relaunching Tala in April 2021, Beverley appointed Morgan Fowles as managing director the following month. As a result of these bold moves, 2023 saw them yield an eight figure sum, up 100 percent on 2022.

# HIGHLIGHTS

Tala is made for women, by women:

The company is **71% women-owned**, has a **75% female board** and **75% of leadership positions are held by women.**

Last year, within an hour of launching, their puffer jackets, retailing up to £199, had hit **£1 million in sales.**

Tala's TikTok has almost:

**60,000 followers** and over **700,000 likes.**

The brand is growing in Europe and the US facilitated by **improvements to their shipping and logistics options.**

# INNOVATOR INSIGHTS





# ONE TO WATCH

## ADANOLA, NIRAN CHANA, CEO

Innovative Manchester-based athleisure brand Adanola is on our 'one-to-watch' list. Founded in 2015 by Hyrum Cook, they've **grown the business 311% from 2022 to 2023, with sales expected to double again in 2024.**

Recently hiring Niran Chana (previous CCO at Gymshark), the brand are looking to leverage his experience to improve the digital customer experience and grow internationally.

Adanola is targeted at the millennial and Gen Z female audience and **is building a loyal community of fans**, leveraging massive amounts of **user-generated content to grow the brands social footprint and build brand trust.**

Claiming to be 'as versatile as your lifestyle and to make you feel like your very best self', Adanola want to make 'high quality activewear and wardrobe essentials **accessible to everybody**'. With taglines like '**Everybody's everyday uniform - Whether you're running, running errands, or just running late**' Adanola have got the **feel-good vibe and relatability nailed.**







LEADING  
THE FIELD—

WHO'S GETTING  
IT RIGHT AND HOW?



# LULULEMON, NIKKI NEUBURGER, CHIEF BRAND OFFICER

Securing 4th place in BusinessChief.com's top ten sports brands in the world 2023, Canadian sportswear brand Lululemon is a comparative newcomer, launching in 1998 with a range of yoga wear which has since extended into a wide range of athletic apparel, running shoes and personal care products. Lululemon is committed to innovation and evolution with its commitment to responding to feedback and 'setting the bar' in the use of technical fabrics and functional designs.

In 2022, Lululemon won the Streamline Award for using efficient marketing tactics that allowed them to adjust to the changing business landscape. Their digital marketing success is demonstrated by **creative tactics** and prioritising business **strategy over paid spend KPIs**. In 2022 they achieved a 27% year-over-year (YoY) growth in total visits, surpassing Nike, Gymshark, and Fabletics. Email traffic rose 62% YoY. Mobile traffic rose 50%+ YoY through investing in paid search and a winning Black Friday email campaign. They recorded a US\$7.06bn turnover in 2023.

Lululemon's chief brand officer Nikki Neuburger is passionate about **walking the talk of championing women and their potential**. A passionate sportswoman from a family of athletes, the majority of her career's been in the sports industry, including 14 years working her way from intern to global vice president of Nike Running.

'The entire industry is changing to recognise, support and **celebrate female athletes** more often and more consistently. There's **more inclusion and representation** today than ever before—we see more women on the field of play as well as in leadership roles in business.'

Lululemon is a global company comprised of approximately 75 percent women and is **'deeply focused on supporting the wellbeing, development, and empowerment** of this group.' There's quite a bit of data available now that makes clear the long-term positive impact that sport can have on women and girls, and as a result we've seen positive change.

'Our purpose is to **elevate human potential by helping people to feel their best**. We live into this daily by creating transformative products and experiences that build meaningful connection, unlocking greater possibility and wellbeing for all.'

## HIGHLIGHTS

Over the last 25 years,

Lululemon have expanded to **innovate for more guests** (for example, all genders, extended sizes) **across more activities** (such as running, training, tennis, golf and hiking) **in more markets around the world**, while maintaining their focus on enabling people to be well.

2023, saw them achieve sixth straight year of gender pay equity,

recognised in **Bloomberg's Gender Equality Index** for the fifth year in a row.

2023, saw them achieve sixth straight year of gender pay equity,

**US\$2.25 million to women's initiatives** across grassroots organisations and global non-profits focused on women's wellbeing in the global supply chain.

*here's to the  
badass mothers  
in our lives*

[read about bette >](#)

[see our favourites >](#)





# NEW BALANCE, CHRIS DAVIS, BRAND PRESIDENT & CMO

Listed 8th in The Forbes World's Most Influential CMOs List: 2024, Davis has led the 118-year-old brand through a massive turnaround to become a luxury staple. He's made dad shoes cool through stand-out creative, forming authentic partnerships and taking calculated risks. The brand consistently features in Hypebeast's top 3 brands. Revenues have increased 96% since 2020, with FY23 revenue up 23% YoY.

"New Balance has always been a brand that has challenged the status quo, constantly reinventing itself, and really striving to be the best, not the biggest... We try to do things differently. Addressing and embracing that challenge is something that we have owned as a brand and really made part of our identity.

We live by the truth that the death of all major brands in the retail, sports and fashion space really lies in the notion of stagnation... We try to move at the speed of Instagram... We have really built a culture of calculated risk-taking... We've done that by operationalising our budget to be conducive to calculated risk-taking.

We use this 50, 30, 20 mindset. 50% of our budget is directly allocated to more traditional means like broadcast, out of home, or lower funnel performance marketing things that we know will work. 30% of our budget is allocated towards calculated risk, like things in a different industry. 20% of our budget is purely dedicated to experimental marketing. And the expectation is that if it hits, it's going to hit big. If it misses, we learn and we move on. If something works in the 20%, then it goes in the 30%. If it works two or three more times, then we kick it out of the 30% and move it into the 50%.

Our brand mantra is "fiercely independent since 1906." We have a strong equilibrium of what has brought us forth for the last 115 years, but more importantly what's going to take us to the next level over the next 115 years."

"It takes a special partner to represent a challenger brand. It takes a special mindset, it takes a unique vision. Simply put, it just takes guts. And the approach that we really utilise with our ambassadors is the notion of partnership over sponsorship."



## HIGHLIGHTS

Partnering with young American tennis star Coco Gauff in

speaking out about **social injustice, standing up for what's right**, using their platforms to amplify her message.

Being challenged by Jaden Smith

to become **more sustainable**.

Darius Bazley became an intern for the brand, developing their social media strategy and content for basketball.

**It was the first time ever** that an athlete signed with a brand to be an intern first and then a professional athlete second.

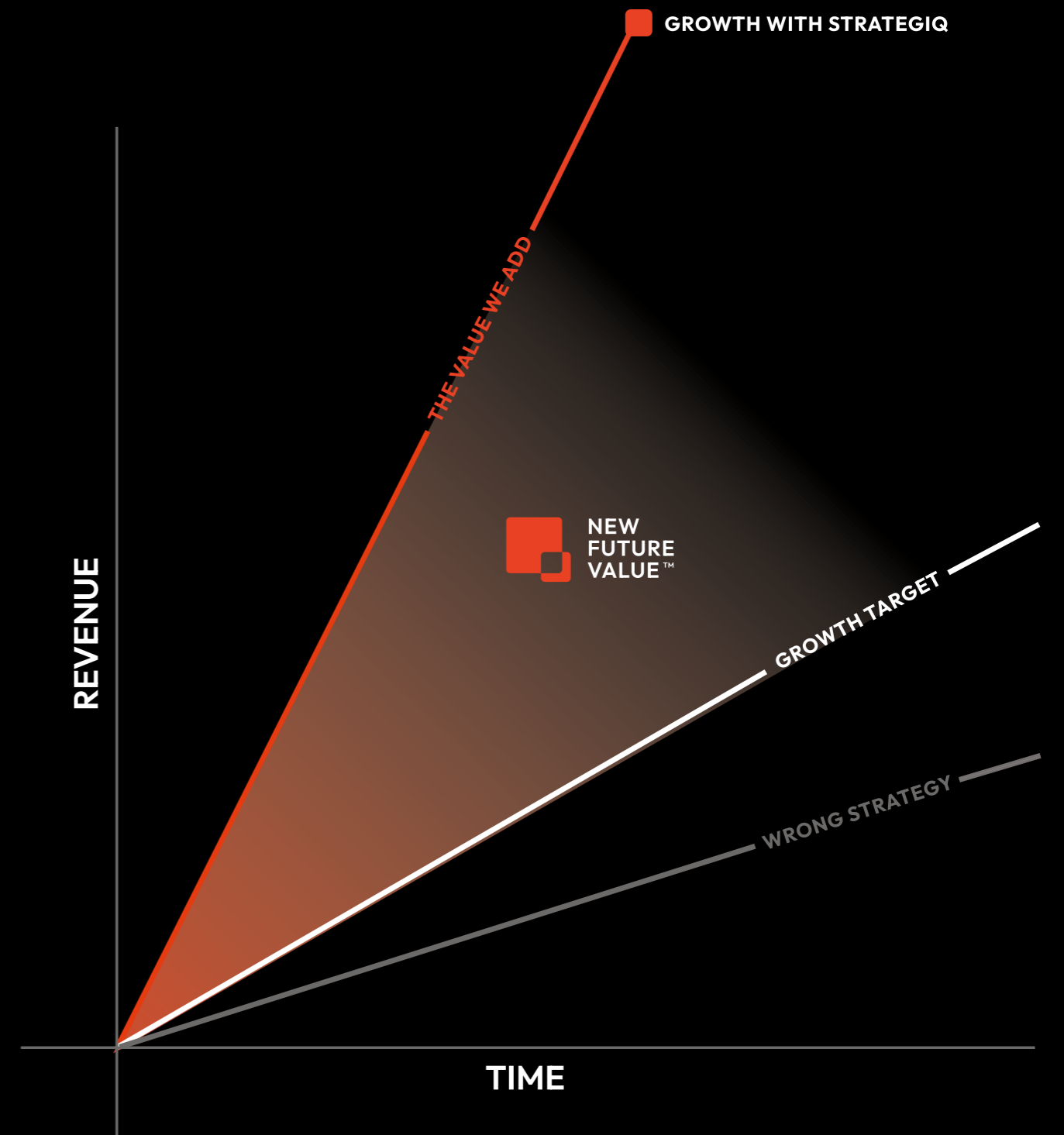
Investing a hundred million dollars over the last couple of decades in combating childhood obesity in underserved communities.

**Promoting healthy activity and education on diet** through their foundation.



# CREATING NEW FUTURE VALUE

It's clear that opportunities in the womens activewear category are there for the taking. **So how do progressive brands optimise, accelerate and innovate their marketing efforts to realise new future value?** We've put a few ideas together that we'd love to refine with brands that are pursuing growth and future value.





# OPTIMISE <sup>70</sup>

ACCELERATE

INNOVATE

## OPTIMISATION IDEAS:

- <sup>01</sup> Optimise audience attraction through using imagery that is diverse and representational of an array of body types, ethnicities and abilities.
- <sup>02</sup> Establish key messages for campaigns that will resonate with your audience and represent them well.
- <sup>03</sup> Consider where your brand advertising budget is best spent to extend your audience reach.



OPTIMISE

ACCELERATE 20

INNOVATE

**ACCELERATION IDEAS:**

- <sup>01</sup> Accelerate adoption of your brand by diverse audiences by partnering with parallel businesses on a shared mission.
- <sup>02</sup> Consider sponsorship of female dominated sporting events to align your brand closer with your target audience and mission.
- <sup>03</sup> Find representational influencers that represent your brand mission and work with them to amplify your narrative.



OPTIMISE

ACCELERATE

INNOVATE **10**

## INNOVATION IDEAS:

Think about the whole person. Where are the opportunities to meet female consumers needs beyond a sale. How can you add value and build their brand loyalty?

- 01** Is it launching a series of stress less tutorials on YouTube, or TikTok?
- 02** Should you consider partnering with a healthy meals service like Mindful Chef with a loyalty discount to those in your community to address their nutritional worries?
- 03** Would you launch an app that enables them to journal their concerns before engaging with restful music and helpful meditation direction to improve their sleep quality?



# ABOUT STRATEGIQ

StrategiQ partner with retail brands to realise new future value.

We do this through our **70.20.10** programme to **Optimise, Accelerate** and **Innovate** strategic marketing that delivers increased sales at an accelerated pace.

We focus 70% of our attention to **Optimise** what you do, 20% to **Accelerate** growth through insight and 10% to identify areas for **innovation** that will elevate your business.

If you'd like to explore what we could do for your business please email [enquiries@strategiq.co](mailto:enquiries@strategiq.co) or call us on **020 4574 6531**.

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