



# Golf & Social Media: Engaging Women

Insights, Analysis & Solutions



Social listening data provided by Ipsos



# Introduction

Despite recent increases in both the total number and proportion of female players (now approximately 25% in the United States\* and up to 20% in the United Kingdom\*\*), golf remains a male-dominated sport.

Social media reflects some of the long-term challenges golf faces in reaching and engaging more female participants, from a lack of visibility and relevant content to demeaning comments and misogyny. But it also offers important opportunities.

These are the findings of a landmark study by Syngenta and Ipsos, 'Golf & Social Media: The Great Divide,' which explored 16.1 million social media posts, shares, comments, articles and blogs over three years to analyze what people were saying about golf online.

In this summary report we provide an overview of social media and the challenges and opportunities of increasing female participation – a topic Syngenta has been an industry leader on for more than a decade with our Growing Golf campaign and **love.golf** program. Specifically, we'll look at three key topics, as well as offering solutions and case studies.

- **Visibility**
- **Femininity**
- **Promotion**

\*National Golf Foundation \*\*R&A



“  
Boys at the club  
don't look at me.  
But their dads do.  
”  


“  
I've played with women  
who were just starting  
golf, got into a women's  
group and realized it wasn't  
such an exclusionary  
environment.  
”  




Clothes LPGA #girlswhogolf Fun  
YOUNG GIRLS #golfbabes MISOGYNY  
LADY Golf School

# Expert Analysis

“Online, golf has the image of a male dominated sport. There’s low visibility of women’s golf on social media and TV and, as a result, women feel left out.

“You don’t see women professional players and tournaments on TV to the same degree as other women’s sports. While some brand ambassadors and celebrities who endorse golf brands are visible, it’s limited and tends to reach the existing golf community, not a wider public audience.

“There’s also some misogyny online, and offline at the course, making women feel unwelcome and excluded from the golf community.

“What’s required is greater femininity, recognising that women golfers and new players want different experiences to men, as well as even more promotion of actions and initiatives to invite the wider public to women’s golf.

“What is effective is a lifestyle-themed approach, especially on Instagram with posts and hashtags relating to women’s golf. There’s a community of lifestyle golfing that successfully touches women – and that’s a good lever and drives engagement. But it’s still not enough.”

Claire Martin  
Ipsos Social Intelligence Researcher





# Visibility

There is low visibility of women's golf on social media. For a wider audience to be reached and engaged, women need to see other women golfers.

Professional golfers who become ambassadors for larger sports brands (e.g. Tisha Alyn for Puma) can enhance visibility and create a perception of accessibility to women. Similarly, celebrities who appear playing golf to endorse brands (e.g. K-pop star Jang Won-young for Gospheres) and events (Ellen DeGeneres for the LPGA) raise awareness to large public audiences.

Mixed golf events with teams of men and women can also help promote awareness of women's golf. Fans are supportive and perceive it as good entertainment. However, some detractors say this has been tried in the past with little effect.



DAY3 Women On The Rise featuring Golf Personality and Pro: @tishaalyn #PUMAWomen (from Puma)



Jang Won-young has become an ambassador of popular local golf wear brand GOSPHERES as an icon for millennials and generation Z.



Having a mixed event would be really interesting... Having a PGA Tour and LPGA Tour player as a team competing against other players would be really cool and fun engagement for fans. Danielle Kang (Golf Digest)



#WomanCrushWednesday We hear a lot about the men who play golf but meet Aimee Cho aka golfwithaimee. [...] Aimee actually makes the game really fun while also sharing pro tips (from Bryce Dallas Howard)



# Femininity

While most golf content online is masculine in style and tone, women want to feminize the game with relevant social media content expressing personal flair and style.

Fashion and clothing is a hot topic, with women golfers posting and discussing dress codes and how it impacts their desire to play. Some complain that golf clothes lack femininity, do not fit well and reflect sexism in the sport, when there is a predominance of pink and purple. For prospective players, the concept of dress codes and unflattering apparel puts them off golf. Women who run their own golf clothing brands are often praised for producing beautiful and practical clothing for golf.

Using hashtags such as #girlsthatgolf and #girlswhogolf, women create online communities of modern, young and dynamic golfers.



Yes, I am a woman who plays golf. No, I don't want everything to be pink. Please do not mention Elderberry as an alternative.

*YouTube comment (video from the LPGA encouraging girls in golf)*



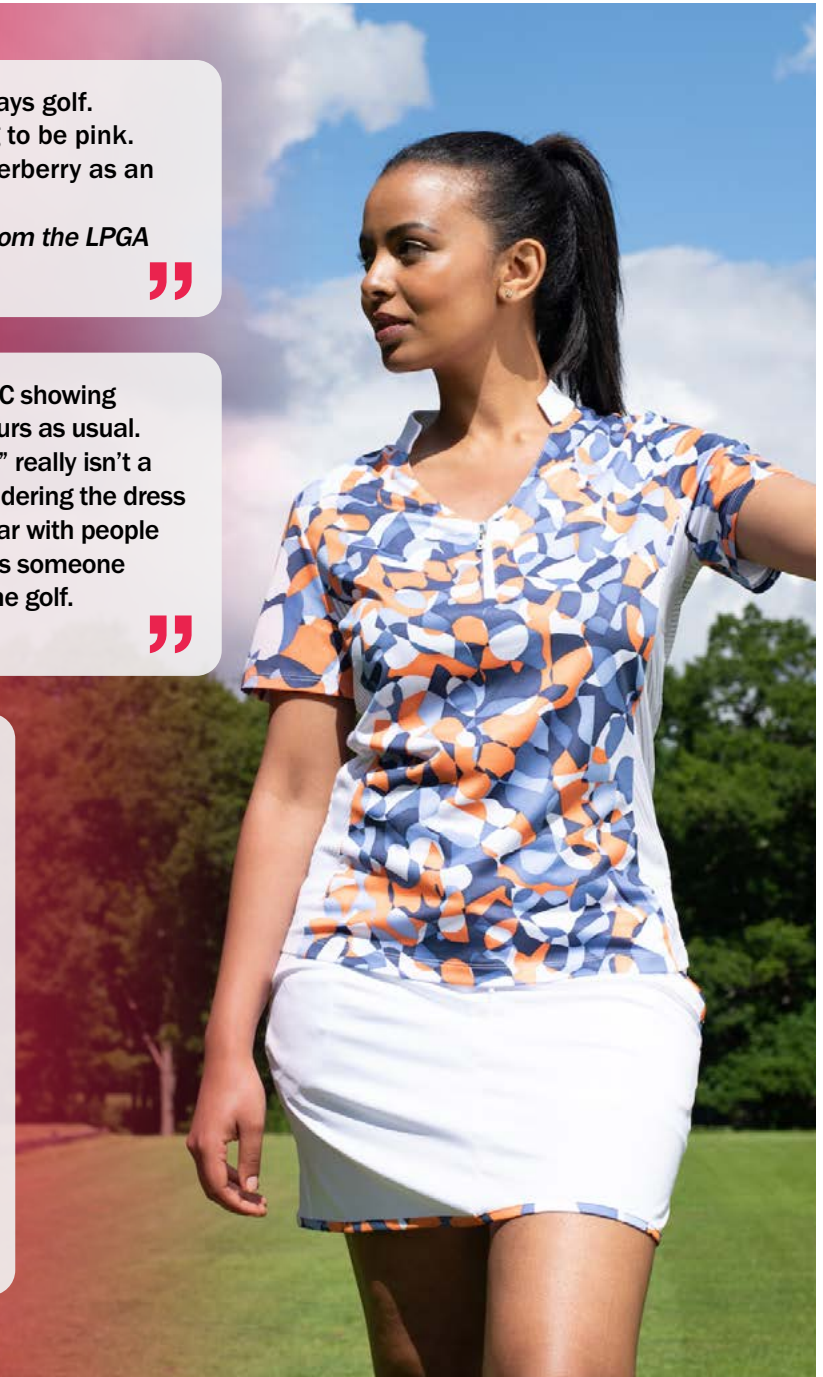
Not that that excuses the IOC showing themselves up to be dinosaurs as usual. "But golf has a dress code..." really isn't a compelling argument, considering the dress code isn't particularly popular with people who play it - and I say that as someone getting ready to go play some golf.

*Forum*



**WHYISITALLSOBOXY ♀**

This is why I love the smaller business (women run) golf retailers. They always have fun designs, cute fits, and a ton more options. They don't just take a man's polo, crop it, and chop the sleeves off to make it a "woman's fit" top ♀. Hate hate hate. #golffashion #womengolfers #girlswhogolf #wewantcuteclothestoo #ladygolferproblems





# Promotion

Women need encouragement and appropriate opportunities to start golf. However, all too often such experiences fall under the radar and fail to reach wider audiences.

Professional players are often advocates and role models for young girls. Inspiring and encouraging speech is important, especially when combined with collaborations with larger brands and businesses, amplifying the message to the mass market.

A more lifestyle oriented approach, including via Instagram and TikTok influencers, appears most successful, showcasing fun, informal experiences with broad appeal.

While golf courses and associations do try to promote women's golf, often they reach only existing golfers, not wider audiences.



Bringing new people, especially women, into the game of golf by showing them how fun it can be through my silly dances, tricks, tips, you name it - is what fuels me! Just remember, If you're doing something you love for a living and you are truly happy within yourself - then THAT is the true meaning of #winning

*Tysha Alyn*



Happy #WomensGolfDay! I will always encourage all females to play this game, and am so hopeful for the future of golf and the unity it brings.



I just saw this piece for the first time. It's so good. Will you please post the series on TikTok? Our daughters and nieces need to be exposed to the series even if they don't golf.



Golf is a game for everybody, and Topgolf is a great steppingstone for those who have never picked up a club and want to come along and have a go. We hope these #FOREeveryone sessions at Topgolf venues will aide as inspiring more women and girls to get involved in the sport.

*Top Golf communication*





# Solutions

“

These findings chime with earlier market research into the \$35 billion a year economic opportunity to increase female participation. Our 2014 study found that 10% of non-golfers became interested in new sports by seeing them on TV. The perception and popularity of women's football and cricket have developed rapidly thanks to a potent combination of TV and social media amplification. This represents a significant opportunity for golf, as does the finding that relevant lifestyle and experience-focused content on Instagram and TikTok can reach significantly larger female audiences than are currently being achieved.

**Mark Birchmore**

Syngenta, Global Head of Marketing, Turf & Landscape

Golf for women needs to be more visible on social media. The game itself and content on social media needs to reflect and be relevant to the more feminine approach of female customers, including clothing. And promotion of opportunities to start golf need to be better publicized to reach wider audiences. Taking a more lifestyle approach, especially through channels such as Instagram and TikTok, are more likely to reach and engage more women with content that presents golf as an appealing experience.

**Claire Martin**

Ipsos, Social Intelligence Researcher

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# Case Studies

Discover how golf courses around the world are tackling gender challenges with innovative solutions:

## Visibility

### Women's sport boom

Around the world interest and investment in women's sport is accelerating at a rapid pace. What does this mean for golf? Will more women take up the game?



### Fighting women's corner

PGA Professional Emma Booth was staggered at the lack of women featured in a golf manufacturer's marketing during a product launch. So she spoke up and took action.



### Women's Golf Day

Extending the celebration to over 1,200 locations across 80 countries, the global movement utilizes social media to put the spotlight firmly on women.



## Femininity

### love.golf

The empowering group coaching experience for women invites its customers to wear whatever they like, not conforming to typical stereotypes or expectations.



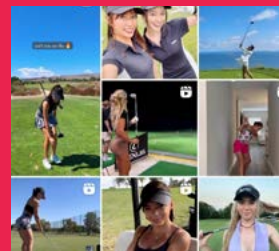
### Fore All

New female-led apparel brands, including Fore All, are on a mission to bridge the gap between golf and lifestyle wear and speak to a 'new breed of women golfers'.



### #girlswhogolf

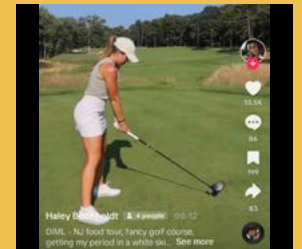
Young women are utilizing social media hashtags to express their own style, flair and femininity on the course and attach themselves to a like-minded community of females.



## Promotion

### Social media sweetspots

A new generation of female golfers who share their experiences on Instagram and TikTok are likely to have a major impact in inspiring new women to take up the game.



### Start small

Cathy Harbin faced the challenge of having virtually no female golfers when she took over Pine Ridge Golf Course, Texas. But by starting small, she has built up a thriving community of women.



### Influencers take on golf

Social media influencers of different ages and backgrounds were invited to take on the game, document their experiences and raise awareness to a diverse non-golfing audience, programs.





# Market Insights

*Golf & Social Media: The Great Divide* is free to download from [www.syngentagolf.com](http://www.syngentagolf.com)

Look out for our series of snapshot reports:



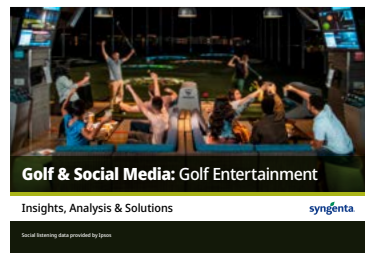
> Sustainability



> Engaging Women



> Diversity



> Golf Entertainment

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