



#LikeAGirl

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CASE STUDY 1 | PRO-SOCIAL CAMPAIGN BY ALWAYS®

BACKGROUND

The Always® #LikeAGirl campaign emerged in response to a well-documented public health and communication problem: **the sharp decline in confidence and physical activity participation experienced by adolescent girls during puberty** (Perez, 2015; Media Marketing, 2016). Gender stereotypes that are communicated through everyday language, peer interactions, sports culture, and mass media **reinforce the perception that girls are less capable, less athletic, and less deserving of being in competitive spaces** (Women in Sport, n.d.; Perez, 2015). Because early adolescence is a time of heightened social sensitivity and identity development, the repeated exposure to these gendered messages carries significant consequences for girls during this stage (Perez, 2015; O'Keefe, 2016).

Internal research conducted by Procter & Gamble, in partnership with Research Now, found that girls experience their most significant drop in confidence around the time of their first menstrual period, **making this a uniquely vulnerable developmental window for targeted communication intervention** (Perez, 2015). The campaign's pre-launch data showed that more than half of girls reported a noticeable decline in confidence during puberty, while 89% of girls ages 16 to 24 agreed that words and language have the power to harm girls (Perez, 2015). These findings align with broader communication research demonstrating that **persuasive messages anchored in identity concerns are the most influential when audiences perceive the message as directly relevant to their self-concept** (O'Keefe, 2016).

Additionally, the phrase 'like a girl' functions as a powerful framing device that defines girls' athletic performances as inherently inferior and, through repetition, shapes the internalized beliefs of both girls and those around them (O'Keefe, 2016; Perez, 2015). Always® recognized that this was not a simple branding problem, but **a systemic communication challenge that was rooted in cultural narratives** and reinforced through mass media (Perez, 2015; Mcop.Online, 2025). Therefore, the #LikeAGirl campaign was designed not just to sell a product, but to intervene in this **specific cultural conversation by reframing a derogatory phrase as a symbol of strength**, confidence, and pride, and **using mass media as the mechanism for change** (Perez, 2015; Mcop.Online, 2025).

QUICK FACTS

51%	of girls quit sports they were actively participating in by the end of puberty.
2x	Girls drop out of sports at twice the rate of boys by age 14.
7 in 10	girls who quit sports after puberty reported feeling they did not belong in sports.
67%	of girls who quit reported that society does not encourage girls to play sports.
89%	of girls ages 16–24 agreed that words can be harmful, especially to girls.

Source: Perez, 2015; McNulty, 2016

TARGET AUDIENCE

Primary Audience	Secondary Audience
Girls Ages 10–17 <i>Pre-, During, & Post-Puberty</i>	Young Women Ages 18–34 <i>Millennial Women</i>

The campaign targeted **girls pre- and post-puberty** because that was the developmental stage identified by campaign research as **the most critical window for intervention** (Perez, 2015). Reaching girls during this time period was essential because the confidence decline that begins at puberty does not simply affect how girls feel in the moment; it drives them away from the sports and activities that build the confidence, leadership, and teamwork skills they need most (Media Marketing, 2016; McNulty, 2016).

Girls who disengage from physical activities **lose access to some of the most significant developmental experiences** available to them during that stage of life (McNulty, 2016; Women in Sport, n.d.). Finally, the campaign positioned itself **to address the problem at its most preventable stage**, making this audience not only strategically relevant but also **essential to the campaign’s core purpose** (Perez, 2015; Media Marketing, 2016).

#LIKEAGIRL FORMATIVE RESEARCH

Before the campaign was developed, Always® partnered with Research Now to study puberty and confidence, finding that **girls felt their lowest levels of confidence around the time of their first period** (Perez, 2015). The findings directly shaped the campaign's target audience and central message (Perez, 2015). Additional research examined how the phrase “like a girl” was understood across different age groups and social contexts, finding that the phrase had been widely internalized as **an expression of weakness** (Perez, 2015). Together, these studies confirmed a validated problem and a clear direction before a single message was developed (Perez, 2015).

Next, Always® tested whether the campaign’s approach would resonate with the intended audience (Perez, 2015). The campaign partnered with a documentary filmmaker to produce a social experiment where people of varying ages were asked to perform everyday actions “like a girl,” with their unscripted responses captured on film (Perez, 2015). This approach functioned as both a creative concept and a real-time test of the core insight: the footage revealed that **older participants instinctively performed the actions in an exaggerated, mocking way**, while **younger girls responded with full effort and confidence**, demonstrating on camera the exact pattern the research had identified (Perez, 2015). The contrast between the two groups confirmed that the reframing strategy was not only **grounded in evidence**, but it validated the campaign’s message and creative direction before its public launch (Perez, 2015).



Campaign Photograph from Knecht, 2016

KEY CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

Core Message	Campaign Phases in the Field
<i>“Doing things like a girl means doing it with strength & confidence.”</i>	2014: #LikeAGirl
	2015: Unstoppable #LikeAGirl
	2016: Keep Playing #LikeAGirl
	2017: Keep Going #LikeAGirl

The central message of the campaign was **straightforward and deliberately bold**: doing things “like a girl” should be understood as a mark of strength, confidence, and pride instead of an insult (Perez, 2015). Every element of the campaign was built around this single reframing; **the goal was not to introduce a new idea, but to take a phrase that girls already heard every day and flip its meaning from insult to inspiration** (Perez, 2015).

The message launched in June 2014 through a three-minute documentary-style video on YouTube (pre-seeded with influencers and bloggers to build early momentum) accompanied by the #LikeAGirl hashtag as a participatory **call to action that extended the campaign into an ongoing social conversation** (Perez, 2015). In February 2015, a 60-second version aired during Super Bowl XLIX, marking the first time a feminine hygiene brand had advertised during the Super Bowl and **broadened the campaign’s reach beyond its original digital audience** (Perez, 2015).

From its YouTube launch in June 2014 through its final phase in 2017, the campaign remained in the field for more than three years, with **each phase applying the same empowerment framing to a different challenge girls face at puberty** (Mcop.Online, 2025; Media Marketing, 2016).



Campaign Photograph from Knecht, 2016

THEORETICAL APPLICATION

The campaign demonstrates a precise and well-executed application of **framing theory and identity-based persuasion** as described by O'Keefe (2016). Framing theory says that **the way a message is presented**, not just its content, shapes how audiences interpret information and form attitudes, and that reframing an existing concept can **produce meaningful shifts in perception when the new frame is anchored in something the audience already cares about** (O'Keefe, 2016).

The campaign applied this principle directly by taking a phrase that pre-launch research confirmed was already embedded in girls' daily experience and **systematically repositioning its meaning from an expression of weakness to a declaration of strength** (Perez, 2015). This approach reflects O'Keefe's (2016) argument that identity-relevant messages are most persuasive when the audience perceives them as directly tied to their self-concept, a condition the campaign satisfied because **the target audience was the group where the phrase carried the most personal and developmental weight** (Perez, 2015; O'Keefe, 2016).

The campaign also reflects theoretical application of evidence-based emotional framing (O'Keefe, 2016). Instead of forcing a new meaning, **the social experiment allowed the reframing to emerge from unscripted participant responses, making it a stronger persuasive strategy because the message felt discovered rather than delivered**, ultimately reducing audience resistance (Perez, 2015; O'Keefe, 2016). In all, the campaign's design, execution, and results confirm framing theory's key premise, that when a message is rooted in audience identity and delivered authentically, it produces genuine attitude change, as evidenced by the positive association with the phrase rising from 19 to 76 percent among the target audience (Perez, 2015; O'Keefe, 2016).

PROJECT EVALUATION

The #LikeAGirl campaign was evaluated using a combination of **media analytics, audience engagement metrics, social media sentiment monitoring, and post-campaign brand research** to determine whether the messaging had reached its intended audience and shifted attitudes (Perez, 2015). Evaluation focused on three primary outcomes: **the campaign's overall reach, the degree to which public perception of the phrase had changed, and the extent to which audiences actively participated in and shared the message** (Perez, 2015). Social media conversations were monitored in real time across Facebook and Twitter, tracking hashtag engagement, sentiment, and the volume of user-generated content to assess how the audience was receiving and responding to the campaign message (Perez, 2015).

The results indicated that **the campaign succeeded on every key measure**. The original video generated more than 90 million views worldwide and 4.5 billion media impressions across traditional and digital platforms, **far exceeding the campaign's initial goals** (Perez, 2015). Post-campaign brand research showed that positive association with the phrase "like a girl" rose from 19% to 76% among women ages 16 to 24, **demonstrating a meaningful shift in attitude the campaign was designed to change** (Perez, 2015).

Social media sentiment surrounding the campaign exceeded 90% positive, and the #LikeAGirl hashtag generated over 177,000 tweets within the first three months alone, **reflecting strong audience engagement and organic participation** well beyond what paid media could achieve (Perez, 2015; Mcop.Online, 2025). The campaign's longevity was further demonstrated by three subsequent phases that extended the key messages through 2017, each continuing to drive public conversation around girls' confidence and sports participation (Mcop.Online, 2025; Media Marketing, 2016).

KEY EVALUATION RESULTS

Evaluation Area	Method	Key Result
Reach and Awareness	Video view tracking	90+ million YouTube views; 4.5 billion media impressions worldwide.
Attitude Change	Post-campaign brand survey	Positive association with "like a girl" rose from 19% to 76% among women ages 16 to 24.
Social Engagement	Hashtag and sentiment monitoring	Positive social media sentiment exceeded 90% with over 177,000 #LikeAGirl tweets in the first three months.
Sustained Engagement	Campaign phase tracking	Three added phases extended the messaging from 2014 through 2017.

Table 1. Summary of key evaluation results for the Always* #LikeAGirl campaign. Sources: Perez, 2015; Mcop.Online, 2025; Media Marketing, 2016.

References

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