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**The Representation of Women in Mountain Biking Media:  
Is the rise of women participating in mountain biking adequately  
reflected in the media's coverage of the sport?**

**By**

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## Table of contents

1. Introduction:
  - 1.1 Research Aims
  
2. Literature Review
  - 2.1 Mountain Biking in the UK
  - 2.2 Gender and Sport
  - 2.3 Related Study
  - 2.4 Further study of women in lifestyle sport
  
- 2 Methodology
  - 3.1 Surveys
  - 3.2 Interviews as a method
  - 3.3 Potential Future Research
  
- 4 Results
  - 4.1 Female Respondents
  - 4.2 Male Respondents
  - 4.3 Interview Results
  
- 5 Discussion
  - 5.1 Survey discussion
  - 5.2 Interview discussion
  
6. Conclusion
  
7. Appendices
  - 7.1 Appendix 1
  - 7.2 Appendix 2
  
8. References

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Table with a summary of research conducted

Figure 2: Ages of women in survey

Figure 3: Length of time riding: Female mountain bikers

Figure 4: MBUK respond to female reader about the lack of representation for women in their magazine, issue 303, June 2014

Figure 5: Rachel Atherton on a recent cover of Dirt Magazine

Figure 6: MTB publications read by respondents (women)

Figure 7: Ages of men in survey

Figure 8: Men's views on coverage of women in MTB

Figure 9: MTB publications read by respondents (men)

## 1. Introduction

As greater numbers of women are now participating in mountain biking (MTB) and other 'alternative, lifestyle and extreme sport' is this being adequately reflected in the media's coverage of the sport? Although this dissertation will examine the question regarding a range of sport, the focus will be on the representation of women in mountain biking media with additional focus predominantly on the UK media. Although there are less women participating in the sport and working in the industry than men, should this have an impact on the role of women within mountain biking or how they are represented in the media?

Since the number of women in MTB is increasing, manufacturers are now paying more attention to the female portion of the market and there has been an emergence of female specific cycling publications, there still doesn't appear to be a corresponding increase in coverage for women, women's products and reviews in market leading publications. Through my own experience of being a female mountain biker, and a journalist in the industry it is something that I am aware of and keen to investigate. Sport has an important role in society and the media has a responsibility to provide equal coverage and representation for women.

This study aims to give insight into how things may be changing as the sport develops and more women become involved, as well as the potential consequences of the marginalization of women in MTB media. UK magazines include, but are not limited to: Mountain Biking UK, Mountain Bike Rider, Dirt Magazine, Wideopen Magazine, Singletrack Magazine, Women's Cycling and What Mountain Bike with online publications such as Total Women's Cycling, More Dirt, IMB, Bike Magic and Ride Io. Although these are UK based, they are not limited to providing coverage from within the UK. This study will also look at some of the global online publications such as Red Bull, Pinkbike and Vital MTB.

Research carried out in 2010 by Sacred Rides Mountain Bike adventures surveyed 710 female mountain bikers between the ages of 19 and 60+ from July 20<sup>th</sup> to August 20<sup>th</sup>. The women were predominantly from the USA and Canada, with many other respondents from the UK, New Zealand and Australia, with at least 1% from Europe and South Africa.

38.6% of women surveyed said they had been mountain biking as long as they could remember, with 29.1% selecting between three to five years. Some of the reasons participants chose for 'What do you think is holding some women back from trying MTB?' respondents said:

- Still viewed as a male-dominated sport
- Not enough women MTB role models
- Not enough advertising showing women enjoying sport
- Not enough women only options (for kit, bikes etc)

When asked what would get more women into mountain biking, some of the suggestions were:

- More female MTB role models
- More media coverage of women's events
- More industry support, women's products and clothing
- More media interest in women's events, women MTB magazines, there are great female mountain bikers out there, but they don't get enough attention.

The findings in the Sacred Rides survey are relevant to this study and allow an insight into participant's views to allow a certain understanding into what female mountain bikers think when it comes to the sport, the media and the issues highlighted.

Although there has been a rise of female participants worldwide, there still appears to be a lack of balanced media coverage in the sport. Why, if there is a rise in female participants is this not reflected within the media industry?

The decision, whether apparent or not to give women less coverage may have a wider impact on the number of women wanting to try the sport, and also incorporates mainstream values and ideologies of male-dominance to the audience. Publications have the power to readdress the gender issue and integrate coverage of female riders but appear reluctant or unaware of the need to do so.

## 1.1 Research Aims

The aim of the research is to investigate the representation of women in a male-dominated sport and at least begin to evaluate whether they are represented equally. Mountain biking is dominated by men (Cessford, 1995, Green 2003) there are more men working within the media industry than women and the vast majority of athletes in the sport are men. As the sport becomes more popular with women, has this also been reflected in the media coverage? The purpose of the research is to discover why the mainstream and more niche areas of the MTB media are somewhat reluctant, or perhaps unable to give equal, or more coverage to women participating in the sport.

The focus of this research is to:

1. Investigate the representation of women in the mountain biking media, to examine changes in attitudes and content, and to investigate the role of the media industry in the representation of women.
2. To survey the potential outlook for change, and if things have changed as well as examining what participants themselves think of current coverage.

Mountain biking emerged at a grassroots level in the 1970's and became more mainstream in the 90's. Today some disciplines, such as cross country and BMX are seen in the Olympic games, while other niche and more extreme disciplines such as downhill, freeride and dirt jumping are given little or no coverage by mainstream media outlets<sup>1</sup>. It was also in the late 90's that bike manufacturers realised that there

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<sup>1</sup> However this is also shifting, see BBC and ITV for examples of recent coverage. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/cycling/27180055>)

was money to be made by making and selling women's specific bikes and products. In many lifestyle sports women have become one of the most valuable and targeted areas, as Atencio, Beal and Wilson (2009) suggest, 'many executives within the action sports industry identified women as being the crucial component of expanding their market.'

In the early 90's Mountain Biking UK (MBUK) and Mountain Biker were launched amongst a number of others, their sole purpose was to market new products to consumers (Syndor et al, 2003) As well as offering reviews and tips, advertisers' soon realised magazine was an effective marketing tool. Although the public exposure of the sport has grown, mountain biking has remained a relatively niche sport with specialist publications being the traditional way of reporting on news and events in the MTB world. Despite numerous discussions relating to equal opportunities for men and women, men seem to receive the greatest amount of coverage, whether this is due to the number of women participating in relation to their male counterparts is something that needs to be studied further to see if coverage is balanced. There are many deciding factors behind what is covered, including and not limited to; editorial, advertising, marketing and audiences, but it is apparent that further study into this area would need to be conducted to understand this.

In the past two years competition numbers have almost doubled in women's mountain bike races.<sup>2</sup> There has also been a rise in women's specific mountain biking events in the UK, such as Diva Descent, Daisy Chain events and Air Maiden<sup>3</sup>, as well as a rise in women's specific coaching, holidays and riding groups. Although there has been a rise in female participants, women are often not represented equally in leading MTB publications, but instead given separate publications such as Women's Cycling UK and Total Women's Cycling<sup>4</sup>. This promotes the idea of a gender divide within the sport.

## 2. Literature Review

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<sup>2</sup> Based on race results from <https://www.rootsandrain.com/>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.divadescent.com>

<sup>4</sup> Both Women's Cycling and Total Women's Cycling were launched in 2013 to appeal to female riders.



## 2.1 Mountain Biking in the UK

In 2005, it was estimated that around 5.5 million people in the UK were active mountain bikers<sup>5</sup>. The sport has grown dramatically over the past twenty years with the emergence of new technology, disciplines and the rise in facilities, parks and bike specific trails. Research from the International Mountain Bike Association UK (IMBA) shows that the early production of mountain bikes began around 1979 in America, and began being imported to the UK in 1982. By 1989 there were around 2 million mountain bikes being sold in the UK per year, and by 1996 the Forestry Commission had 'adopted' MTB as a key recreational activity.

Whilst the history of mountain biking is much more detailed than discussed in relation to this study, the sport has only really begun to see a significant rise of female participants in the last few years. While the number of female participants is much larger in the likes of USA and Canada, the UK has a growing number of women taking part in MTB. Research into the participation of people in the UK is something that is often focused on specific areas such as Wales and Scotland, rather than the UK as a whole, and so exact numbers of participants are often fragmented and further research would be needed to give an accurate number into the growth of participants in the past few years.

According to research carried out by Mintel in 2013, unsurprisingly trends in the male population for the UK bicycles market were identified as the variable having the most influence on market value. The research, although not specific to mountain biking, but for cycling as a whole indicated that although there is a strong bias towards men, almost a third of women now cycle and this number has increased since January 2012. It is estimated that there are around 365,000 female off-road cyclists in the UK based on the number of bicycles sold, Mintel's findings give a picture of the industry as accurately as possible based on research available in regards to cycling and MTB. Although the research does not explicitly state the number of regular

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<sup>5</sup> According to research from the International Mountain Bike Association UK

participants, it is safe to assume that the proportions given for bicycle sales translate across into participant numbers (Mintel 2013).

## 2.2 Gender and Sport

There are many studies into the representation of women in sport, as well as gender and sport that have highlighted the ongoing issues as well as journals and studies published on women in masculine workplaces and women working in sports media (Maguire, 2011; Pfister, 2010; Bernstein, 2002; Grubb & Billiot, 2010; Withers & Livingston, 2010). As mountain biking is a relatively niche sport, there is a gap in research regarding it, however there are studies based on other extreme and 'lifestyle' sports that have been used in comparison.

Recent studies have been conducted on the changes in the media coverage of women in sport, it is a topic that has been covered, but not in depth, and not inclusive of mountain biking. From a feminist standpoint, sport is viewed as a sexist institution (Sabo and Curry Jansen, 1992), however in recent years literature has argued that there has been a shift in the coverage female athletes receive. There are many studies concerning gender in sport and media, as well as more inclusive studies into outdoor sport and the growing number of women participating in them.

Research conducted in the 90's (Duncan and Messner, 1998, Kane and Greendorfer, 1994.) relating to media coverage and female athletes shows there is a distinct lack of representation, even by the likes of the BBC and Newspapers such as '*The Sun*' and '*The Times*.' A study held in 1998 showed that 90.2 percent of sports-related programmes on BBC1 covered men's events, 6.7 percent were devoted to women's sports and 3.1% related to mixed sports; the average duration of women's sports on BBC1 was significantly shorter than men's sports (17 minutes versus 42 minutes); 99.5% of sports-related articles in the *Sun* covered men's sport events and 88.5% of sports-related articles in *The Times* covered men's sport events whilst 10.9 percent were on women's sports events with 0.6% covering mixed sports (Mason, 1998).<sup>65</sup> Sport and gender equality is a well-researched and vastly debated

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<sup>65</sup> Further studies may also have been carried out more recently in regards to the topic.

topic (see Pfister, 2000; Obel, 2002; Butler, 1990). Sport is often viewed as a man's domain, with many women participating in smaller numbers, and often receiving less coverage. Extreme sport is no different, due to the small amount of research in this area in comparison to mainstream sport it can be difficult to evaluate the impact of gender equality in mountain biking. The decision to use this study as a proxy for extreme sports is due to the useful comparisons regarding women in sport and the research available. While other 'lifestyle' sports have many differences, they can be compared to mountain biking based on the ethos and fundamental characteristics.

Further studies have shown that women are widely underrepresented in all forms of sports coverage (Eastman and Billings, 2000; McGregor and Melville, 1993). Traditionally sport has been perceived as a specialization in which journalists must have particular credibility and knowledge. Research shows that preferred sportscasters are former athletes, or those perceived to have athletic traits (Allen 2003). This is also true of the mountain bike industry, with many journalists having participated in the sport for a number of years. As the vast majority of the readership, competitors, management, riders and hobbyists in the sport are male, it is important to consider this when assessing why women don't receive more coverage within the industry. Studies of traditional, mainstream sports by sport sociologists have demonstrated the role sport plays in creating and maintaining ideas of male-dominance and difference from women (Bryson, 1983, Messner, 1992, Sabo and Panepinto, 1990.)

### 2.3 Related Study

One particular study 'Mountain biking is for men: consumption practices and identity portrayed by a niche magazine' encapsulates the basis of this dissertation. The authors state that, "Male members of the sport are the main focus of this magazine resulting in very little space being provided to female mountain bikers. Furthermore, mountain biking is portrayed as a male-domain whereby mountain-biking products are to be developed for and used by men." (A. Livingston, Huybers-Withers 2010.) The issues raised in the study are directly linked to this dissertation as they examine gender identity, mountain biking as a male domain, the consequences of the

portrayal of masculinity as well as the issue that mountain biking is an area that hasn't been well researched. Using content analysis, the study examined photographs and text of MBA mountain bike magazine over a period of eight years and illustrated that the earlier support of female athletes and range of MTB disciplines had altered to convey a more narrow portrayal, as Wheaton (2010) discusses in her evaluation of the study, 'Mountain biking was depicted as a male domain. This shift in representation has accompanied the emergence of 'free riding', which focused on dangerous stunts, and aggression, reproducing the physically dominant forms of masculinity found in mainstream sport values.' The study also uncovered that, 'The only women participating in this sport, as represented by MBA from 2001 onwards until the present time, are the few elite women competing in professional mountain-bike competitions.' This is also something that appears to happen often in UK magazines, with a small amount of coverage given to elite women and little coverage given to anything else.

It also reveals the fact that 'the magazine has dedicated very little space for reviewing, testing and advertising of the ever-growing number of female-specific mountain-bike products that have come on the market in the 2000s.' Although the study was similar, and focused on the role and representation of women, the focus is on one magazine in North America, and there are many differences in the US and UK landscapes. The study was published in 2010, and since MTB is going through a process of rapid change, representations could have shifted and may be different here in the UK, but it is apparent that the idea of MTB being a male-dominated sport is something that is echoed and they have discussed potential consequences of maintaining a masculine portrayal, one of those being that women may be less likely to participate in MTB in future.

## 2.4 Further Study

Although there is a gap in studies relating to MTB, there has been research carried out on other lifestyle sports such as surfing, BMX, climbing and skateboarding (Wheaton, 2010; Olive, McCuaig & Phillips 2013) their findings show that there are

similarities in those sports and often women are not represented adequately, in the media, and within the sporting community. In a study looking into women's snowboarding and skateboarding, Young (2004) found that although there was more support for females in snowboarding although female access and involvement were limited in both sports as a result of male participants maintaining an ideology of physical dominance. Duncan & Messner (1998) highlighted that women's participation in sport has increased dramatically in the past fifty years, but despite a greater number of female athletes, the sports media have been slow in reflecting these changes.

## 2 Methodology

A mixed method approach was adopted for the research through the use of surveys and interviews. "The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say." (Kvale, 1996). Surveys were used to evaluate how riders felt about the issue and investigated what men and women thought regarding the representation of women in the MTB media. Interviews were a more personal method for getting an insight into people's views on representation in the media, current coverage and what changes they would like to see in terms of media coverage and participation in future. Content analysis would be a good method to address this study in more detail in future. It may allow for a more conclusive insight into the research question. By using the study "Mountain biking is for men: consumption practices and identity portrayed by a niche magazine' as a basis and looking at the methodology used in the study for comparison for a potential research method in future.

Content analysis was used as an 'examination of the textual discourse and images in MBA, which provided an insight into the symbolic identities (including gender identities) of mountain biking portrayed by this niche magazine, as well as where women fit into this magazine's depiction of this alternative sport.' (Huybers-Withers & A. Livingston 2010). Continuing this study by using content analysis to study both MTB magazines and websites over the last few years to analyse features,

advertisements, pictures, letters, articles, interviews and front covers. These could be coded when women are mentioned to give a more accurate picture of the changes in content over the last few years. The decision not to use content analysis in this study was due to the scale in which the analysis would need to be and the difficulty in obtaining archive material to analyse. According to (Andersen, et al, 2009) ‘Since it [content analysis] is based only on mass communication – either visual, oral, or written – it cannot tell us what people really think about these images or whether they affect people’s behaviour. Which is why interviews and surveys were used in this study.

The survey was delivered online through the use of survey building website, Survey Monkey and the interviews were conducted over a period of six months, dating back to October 2013. Regarding findings uncovered in the literature review, moving forward it was important to identify whether the idea of mountain biking being seen as a male-dominated sport was an opinion held by both male and female mountain bikers. The survey was used to gauge respondent’s thoughts regarding editorial decisions, improving equality and coverage and when they last saw anything relating to women in the MTB media.

Figure 1: Research Conducted

Research	
Interviews	Survey
Mountain bikers	Online questionnaire
From October 2013 to February 2014	(216 responses, though some incomplete)
Predominantly female	

<p>Mixed Questions</p> <p>Through Email</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain bikers</li> <li>• 109 female and 107 male</li> </ul> <p>10 Questions</p>
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### 3.1 Surveys

Surveys were chosen due to being low-cost and as they offer a reasonably fast response rate. The other reason was due to being able to target desired respondents through the use of social media. Chosen participants were current mountain bikers, both male and female, and riders that paid attention to MTB media. One benefit of online surveys is the fact it takes advantage of the internet to provide access to groups and individuals who would be difficult to reach through other channels (Garton, Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 1999; Wellman, 1997). One disadvantage to online surveys is potential bias, either from leading questions or survey design, to counteract this, open ended questions were asked to allow respondents to give their own opinion on potentially leading questions. The surveys were used to uncover if:

1. Respondents thought women were represented equally in the MTB media
2. To discover their thoughts on – if there is a rise in females participating in MTB, is it being reflected within the media industry?
3. Whether women's specific media outlets/publications were a good thing.
4. What MTB media (both online and print) do they enjoy reading and why.

While the data gathered does not represent UK mountain bikers as a whole, it allows an insight into a section of the community. The option to omit a greater number of socio-demographic questions in the study was due to wanting to get a good response rate for the sample, without putting people off from completing the survey by asking what some may consider personal questions. One reason for asking age

was to group the respondents into categories, they were also asked how long they had been riding, as this may provide a connection to their views on the issue based on their age. The survey results below show a mix of responses from respondents. To prevent bias, comments in favour, and either disagreeing or with a different perspective on the question are shown to give balance.

### 3.2 Interviews as a method

The goal with interviews is to get answers about the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee. Methodology used in other studies also include interviews, as this is an intrinsic method to ensuring that a personal representation of the people directly involved are heard, to get a world view on issues, and to discover things other methods could not present. The choice to use interviews was due to wanting the perspective of women and men active within the industry and respondents that are potentially aware of the wider context of the research question. The interviewing process was aided by personal experience of being a female mountain biker in the UK and being aware of the issues highlighted in this study.

There are many advantages and disadvantages to using interviews as a research method. Although using email as a method of delivering an interview may not have been the best way to get the most conclusive answer, this method was used for this research. The method of administering the interviews via email was due to many of the participants not living close enough as well as having limited time due to work commitments. One disadvantage of interviews is potential bias and delays in receiving replies, but conducting interviews through email is essentially more cost-effective and allows the interviewer to conduct more than one interview at a time. Another disadvantage to email is the fact that there is no time frame, and there is no chance to encourage interviewees to give more of a response, or gauge what questions would be best in order for the interview to progress naturally. There are also many things that could be missed, and not answered fully.

Interviews are a good way of getting a real-world context and different perspectives on the same issue and although interviews can be time consuming, it allows for a better understanding of personal experiences than other methods such as surveys.

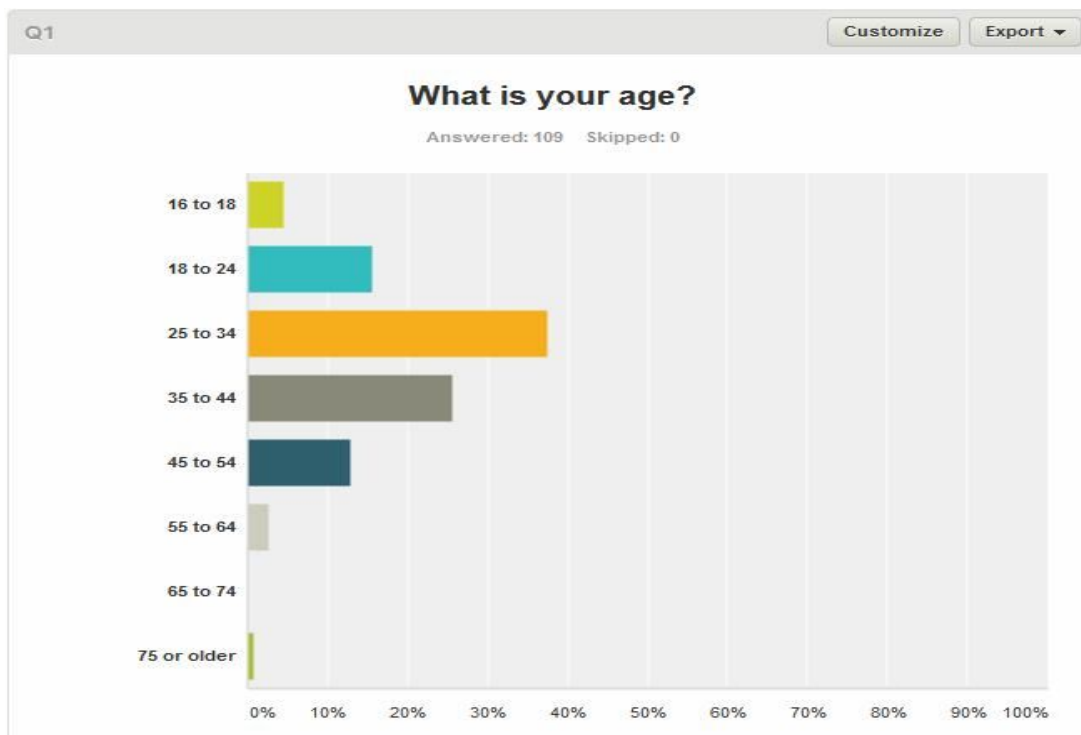


The pros of sending it through email mean that there was no need to make the interviewee feel comfortable and no need to record and transcribe, so all the information was available straight away.

Many of the studies discussed in the research literature also had to draw on both their own experiences and the experiences of other women in sport by using interviews. One such study 'Women sportscasters: navigating a masculine domain' (Grubb & Billiot 2010) chose interviews due to the absence of research in their chosen area and interviews provided the best method to gain an insightful perspective.

## 4. Results

Figure 2 – Ages of women in survey



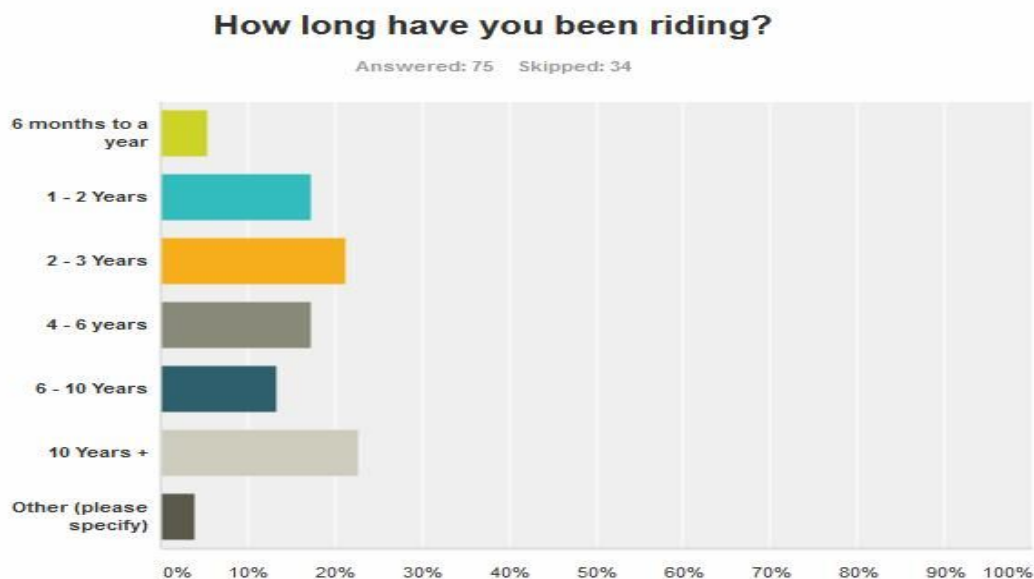
### 4.1 Female Respondents

109 women took part in the survey, the study was targeted at mountain bikers through social media. I was in a unique position to target my survey towards my chosen sample. I shared the survey link to those who are involved in the sport and are at least aware of the MTB media and their coverage of women. While

respondents weren't targeted specifically (on an individual basis) the link to the survey was shared on social networks, in MTB groups and circulated within the MTB community. There was a mixed response rate for each question, with a few respondents opting to skip certain questions, perhaps because they didn't want to answer, or felt they couldn't give an answer.

The questionnaire (as shown in Appendix 1) asked respondents ten questions. While two of the questions required respondents to select an answer, eight of them were open ended and allowed them to discuss their thoughts and ideas about the question. 37.61% of respondents were 25 to 34, closely followed by 25.69% in the 35 to 44 bracket. When asked how long they had been riding, 75 people answered, with 34 people skipping the question. 22.67% of women said they had been riding for 10+ years with others riding between 2 and 6 years (see below).

Figure 3 – Length of time riding: Female mountain bikers.



When asked: Do you think women are represented equally in the mainstream MTB media (Pinkbike, Dirt, Vital MTB, MBUK etc)?

105 women responded with 89 women saying no, others gave a more in-depth answer and their thoughts on the situation. Some of the more in-depth responses included:

Female, 18 to 24, riding 2-3 years: “No, compared to the amount of men in all streams of media there is a big lack of coverage.”

Female, 18 to 24: “No, the sport is very male-dominated and only girls that are top of their game get much representation whereas the amateur guys get a lot more coverage.”

Female, 18 to 24, riding 6 months to a year: “No, but I don't think it's really a sexist thing anymore, I think it's just purely because there are more males to talk about than females.”

Female, 25 to 34, riding 2-3 years: “No. Although this varies between online representation and paper based. Women are represented more equally online.”

Female, 25 to 34, riding 10+ years: “In short no, yes there are less women riding but the representation isn't proportionally smaller.”

Figure 4: MBUK respond to female reader about the lack of representation for women in their magazine, issue 303, June 2014:



When asked: When can you last remember seeing a women featured in a MTB mag or online, where was it and was it a big or small feature? (Cover, small news piece, feature, interview, etc) 102 of the women responded and 7 skipped. It was an open ended question and allowed respondents to write an answer. A few of the responses noted were:

Female, 25 to 34, riding 4-6 years: "Rachel Atherton in recent Dirt article and the pre promotional videos on Dirt. Big feature. Apart from that I think Rachel Atherton has had relatively small mentions in Dirt when talking about the forthcoming world cup. Very small compared with men."

Female 25 to 34, riding 2-3 years: "The latest Dirt - Rachel Atherton on the cover!!! And actually a really decent sized interview spanning 4 pages...apart from that can't remember the last time I saw an interview that big."

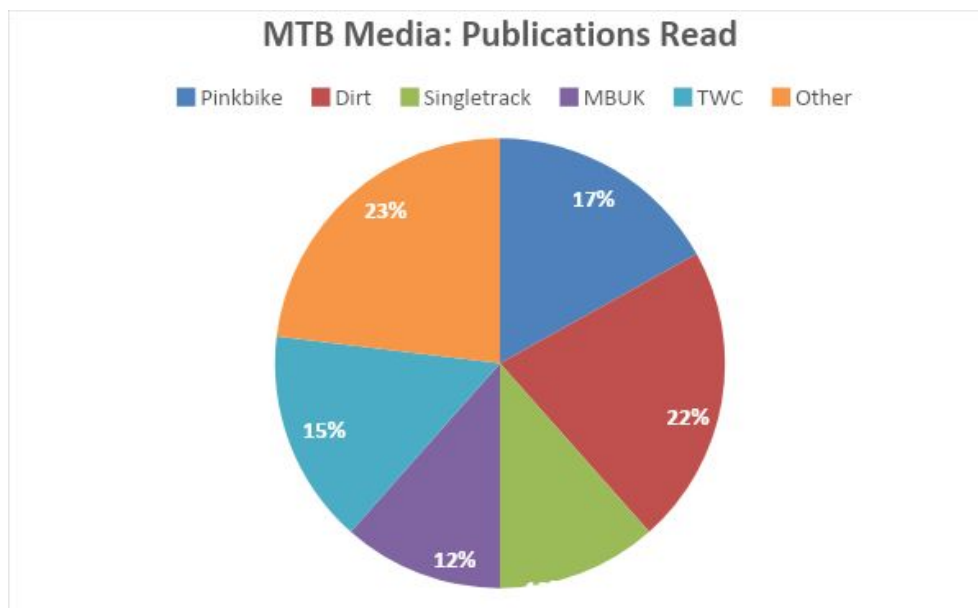
Figure 5: Rachel Atherton on a recent cover of Dirt Magazine



Female 45 to 54, riding 10+ years: “Seen various features on women in most of the mtb press, but it is quite sporadic.”

Female 25 to 34, riding 10+ years: “This is a hard question, because I actively seek out features on women and don't get mags or subscribe to any online stuff. So pretty much everything I see is about women, but because I am looking for it I guess.”

Figure 6: MTB publications read by respondents



When asked which MTB magazines/websites do you enjoy reading and why? 70 of the 109 respondents replied and had the option to write which publications they enjoyed. Many of the respondents chose more than one publication and indicated why they opted for them. Other responses noted were, none, all, none specifically and other publications not named above.

Other questions asked included:

- Do you think that the rise in women's specific media (Total women's cycling, women's cycling etc) is a good thing, or would you rather have the coverage integrated into other things to the scale it is on the women's sites/mags?

A few responses noted included:

Female, 25 to 34, riding 10+ years: "I think it's a great thing. This is just my personal opinion, but I'm not inspired by the guys. I only care about guy stories if they have gone somewhere particularly cool or if they are particularly hot. Otherwise I want to see where the girls are at, what races/events/trips they are doing, what their level of

riding is, what they're wearing, shooting, saying, who they're hanging with. It's what I relate to and I like having somewhere that I can find it.”

Female, 18 to 24, riding 10+ years: “I think that women’s only stuff is a good idea, but that it does as much harm as it does good. It gives other media platforms a reason to not cover women and no men will ever look at it. On the flipside, it allows women to access the information they want rather than trawling through hundreds of backflips and metal music before getting to relevant content.”

Female 25 to 34, riding 1-2 years: “It should be everywhere - it feels like we have to create these special pages so we have somewhere to go to be included in MTB world - not saying they are bad, but why should we have to do this.”

Female, 35 to 44, riding 2-3 years: “I think it is a good thing. We are different from women, so we require different outerwear etc. and hence obviously different take on magazine articles.”

- Why, if there is a rise in females participating in MTB is this not reflected within the media industry? What are your views and ideas on this?

A few responses noted for this question, that may give insight into the issues discussed and to give an idea of how women feel about it were:

Female, 25 to 34, riding 6-10 years: “Maybe not as many women in the media industry?”

Female 35 to 44, riding 6-10 years: “I hadn't really thought about it but guess it's typical of attitudes to women across a lot of sports.”

Female 18 to 24, riding 2-3 years: “Because cycling is still seen as a very male orientated sport.”

Female 25 to 34, riding 10+ years: “Participation at grassroots is not on the agenda of the magazines who sell advertising space. The critical mass of 'new product/event' that is used to draw readership is very infrequently aimed at women or written for women. I have seen columns aimed at women, but am rarely drawn into them as a

reason for buying the magazine as they are precisely a single column. I applaud an article such as that on Rachel Atherton in Dirt this month, but am equally dismayed to see one of the first pictures is of her sat at a sewing machine without her trousers. How can this be equality is there is such a mixed message - put a strong and successful woman on the cover and titillate the majority male audience with a leg shot. As female participation in MTB goes, it's still low for a critical mass in the printed media."

Female, 25 to 34, riding 6-10 years: "It is reflected! There is more coverage now than I can remember ever. However, it still seems mainly driven by a handful of women and not the media themselves. More women on teams is saying to me that we are being regarded as a more notable market."

Women were also asked:

Do you think women are featured less often due to the amount of women in the sport, or is this an editorial thing, due to the majority of staff being male?

74 women responded to this question and were aware of the wider context of the sport, advertising and editorial choices, further responses can be seen in appendix 2 as they provide insight into why female riders think the coverage of women may not be proportionate. A few responses noted were:

Female, 25 to 34, riding 1-2 years: "Probably more to do with the companies advertising in these magazines. If they can shift more stock (which is male-oriented) they'll want a more male audience. And more male athletes to draw that audience, especially when they can explain how rad a piece of equipment is."

Female 25 to 34, riding 4-6 years: "I would say it's the latter - proportionally I see a lot of women out on the trail. Still less than men, but not as rare as magazines seem to think. I guess part of the problem is also convincing advertisers of women's buying power."



Female, 16 to 18, riding 4-6 years: "I think it's because there are less women than men who mountain bike. Therefore the media have to cater for that target market."

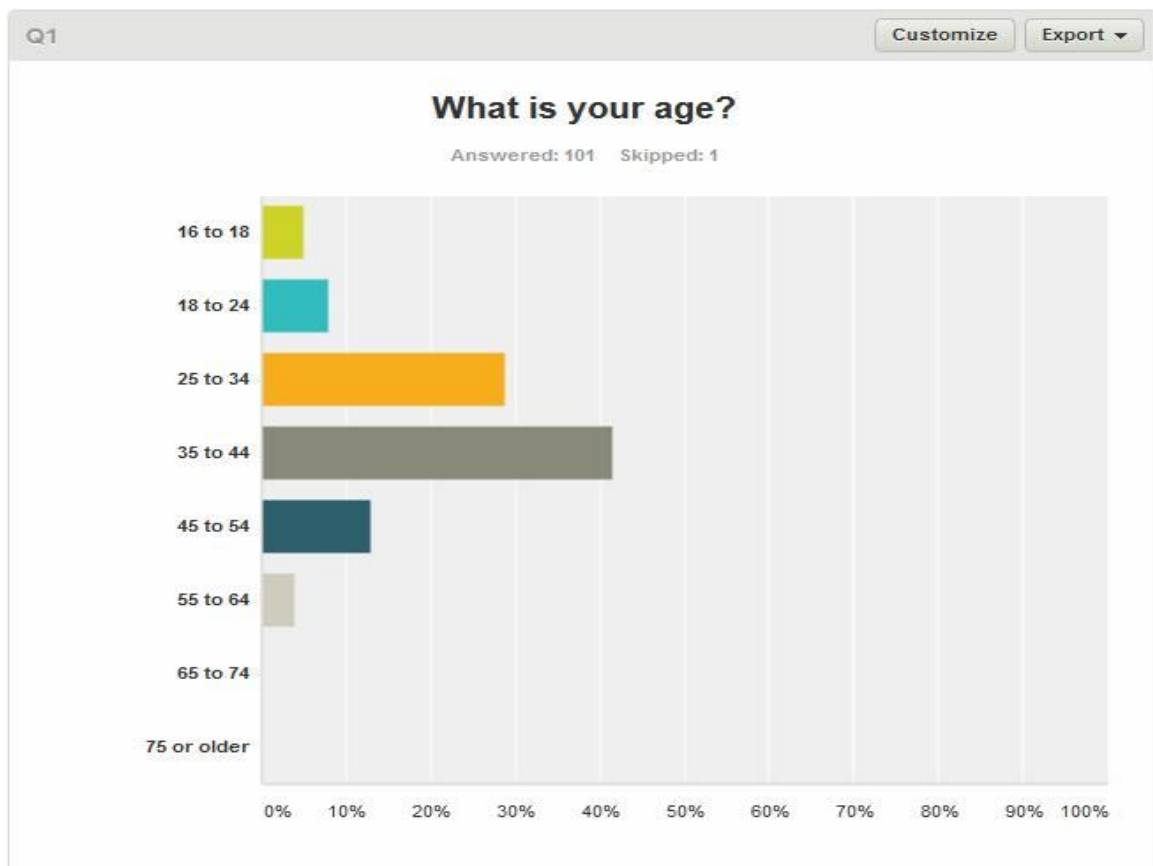
Female, 25 to 34, riding 10+ years: "There are definitely only a few journo's who are female in MTB and there is room for change. Mags need to sell, hence all the rubbish you see in newspapers in general, people just write whatever they think will get people to buy their mag. I do think you have hit an important point though, and for women to find more stuff out about women in MTB, the change needs to be led by women, the writers should be women etc. Not necessarily forever, but definitely during these early stages until everyone can see that women are commercially viable too."

Although 109 women took part in the survey, the number of responses fluctuated for each question with around 70 responses per question. Despite many of the respondents skipping certain questions, the sample remained a good indication of the overall consensus of the women due to the similarity in responses given.

#### 4.2 Male Respondents

As with the women, men were asked ten questions, although four were different from the survey targeted at women. The decision to do this was based on the idea that males may have been involved in the sport longer, and may see the issue differently, it was also to discover if they were conscious about the coverage given to women in the MTB media, their thoughts on representation and whether they were interested in reading about female riders. The survey (as seen in appendix 1) was created in order to gain a perspective on the issue from a male point of view, to perhaps give an indication of things from someone who isn't directly affected by the issues discussed in this study. 102 men took part in the survey and participants were again targeted through social media, not individually, but through mountain bike groups and then shared amongst riders. The men seemed less likely to skip the questions on this survey, with around 90 responding to a question, and around 12 on average skipping.

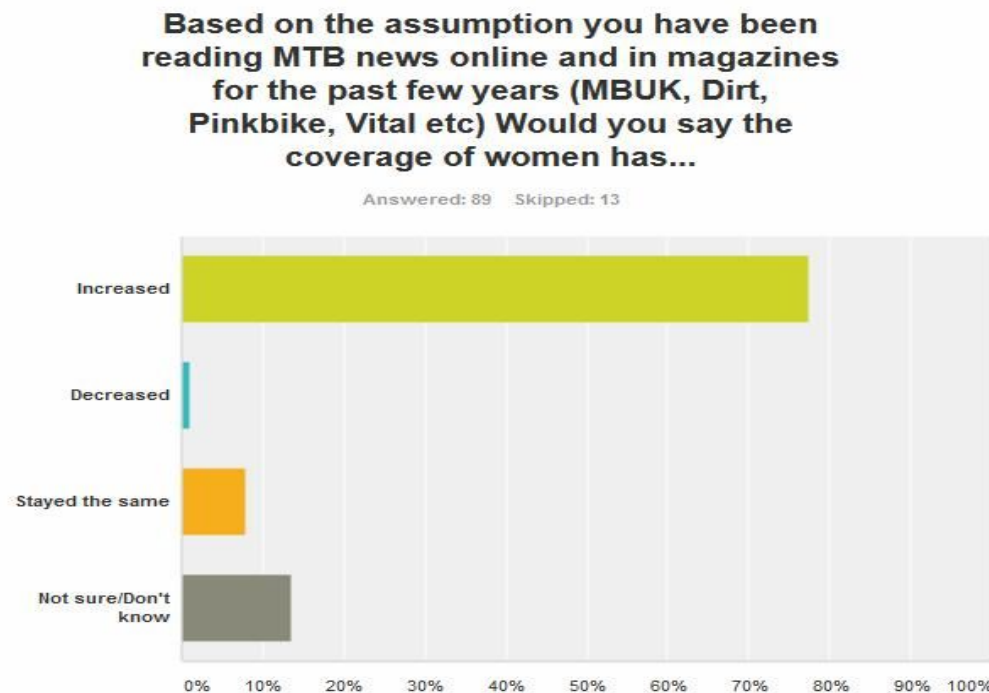
Figure 7 – Ages of men in survey



The most common age of men participating was the 35 to 44 bracket, 42% of the respondents were this age, followed by 28.71% in the 25 to 34 bracket. In relation to this, when asked how long they had been riding, 54.44% of the respondents had been riding for over 10 years. Based on the theory that most of the men had been mountain biking for a long period of time, and perhaps quite aware of the changes going on within the sport, they were asked:

Based on the assumption you have been reading MTB news online and in magazines for the past few years (M<sup>B</sup>UK, Dirt, Pinkbike, Vital etc) would you say the coverage of women has... Increased, decreased, stayed the same or not sure/don't know.

Figure 8 – Men’s views on coverage of women in MTB



69 of the respondents said increased, 12 opted for not sure/don't know, 7 said stayed the same and 1 said decreased. In contrast to this, when asked:

Do you think women are represented equally in the mainstream MTB media (Pinkbike, Dirt, Vital MTB, MBUK etc)?

22 of the men said yes, 6 said don't know/don't read and 72 said no. Whilst this was an open ended question, only a few offered further thoughts on the question, with most giving a yes or no answer based on their experience and knowledge.

To get an idea if the men who the MTB magazines are targeted at were interested in reading about female riders, they were asked:

Are you interested in reading about female riders, if not why?

Again, this was an open ended question, 90 men responded, most with a yes or no answer, with a few giving further thoughts, 73 men said yes they were interested in

reading about female riders, 2 said no, 8 gave a response that was a little unclear, that could be construed as a maybe and 7 said they weren't really interested or didn't read the magazines. A few of the responses worth noting to put the research issues into context were:

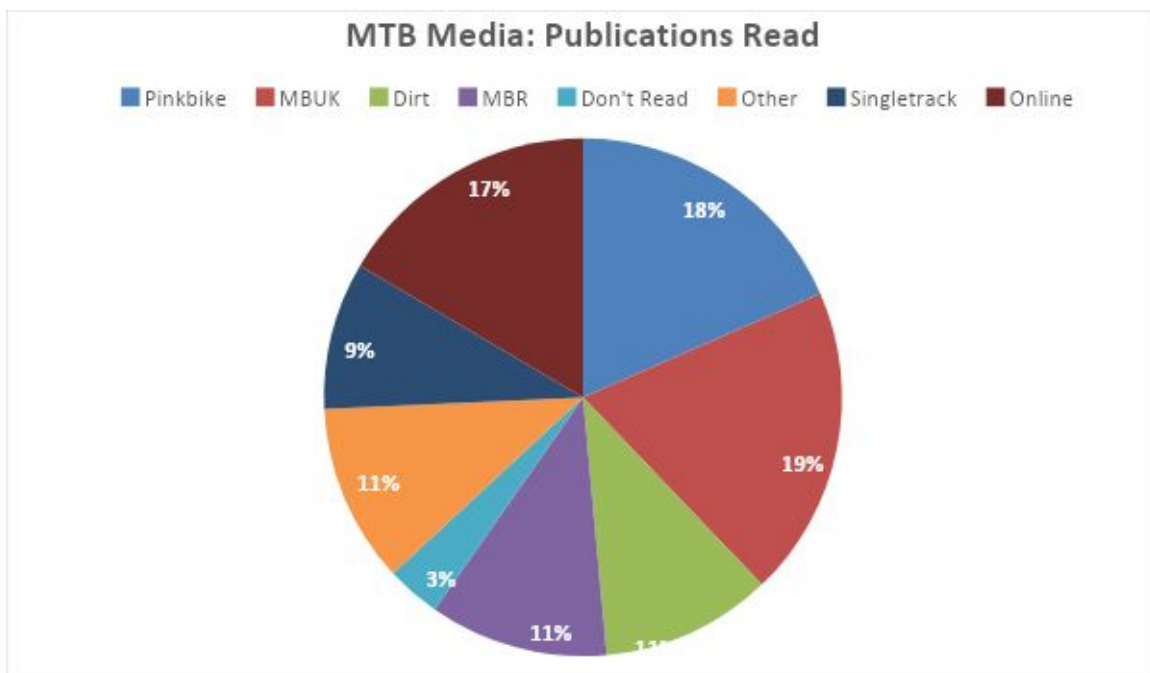
Male, 25 to 34, riding 2-3 years: "Certainly, I get inspiration from any great rider regardless of gender."

Male, 35 to 44, riding 4-6 years: "Yes. More riders help build up the sport and entice other riders who may initially think it's not a sport for them."

Male, 16 to 18, riding 2-3 years: "I would be interested yes, although the amount of elite level female riders are very low which could lead to similar articles being posted on the same athlete which could become tedious after a while. Although more coverage would mean more women getting involved and more competing at elite level."

Male, 25 to 34, riding 10+ years: "I'm interested in reading about mountain biking (regardless of who it involves), and racers of both genders."

Figure 9: MTB publications read by respondents



88 men responded to: Which Magazines/Websites do you read and why? With many of them writing more than one answer. Other included a range of magazines not listed, and online included keeping up to date with things on social networks. MBUK was the most popular, with 40 respondents writing it down, closely followed by Pinkbike with 38 selecting that they read it.

When asked: When can you last remember seeing a woman featured in a MTB mag or online, where was it and was it a big or small feature? (Cover, small news piece, feature, interview, etc) 98 of the men responded. It was an open ended question and allowed respondents to write an answer. A few of the responses noted were:

Male, 35 to 44, riding 4-6 years: “[in the last] Three months. Manon Carpenter. Decent sized feature but it’s still dominated by males (including the reviews and pics for adverts etc).

Male, 35 to 44, riding 10+ years: “Rarely, and only in features on 'women's mountain biking' things.”

Male 55 to 64, riding 10+ years: “Last few days it is becoming more popular and events are more regular.”

Male 35 to 44, riding 2-3 years: “Every month in MBR magazine there are columns written by a couple of different ladies. They also feature women's equipment alongside men's.”

### 4.3 Interview Results

The interviews were aimed predominantly at women for the reason that they are directly affected by the issues in the study. Arguably men would be aware of it, but as they as the majority, they receive the coverage and don’t often experience the issue of being underrepresented by the MTB media, the decision to talk to more women was to give a different perspective and perhaps put the issue into a different context. The findings below show responses from one or two questions and thoughts from interviewees. Most of the questions followed the same basis, but the questions were designed to give an indication of what people working within the industry

thought. Although this doesn't really allow the wider audience and other participants view to be shown, it was designed to evaluate what others thought following the surveys, to possibly provide a more knowledgeable view on the issue.

All of the interviewees are involved in the sport in one way or another, four of them are top MTB athletes; Manon Carpenter, Rachel Atherton, Katy Curd and Tahnee Seagrave. One is a women's MTB clothing designer; Hannah Myers. The others are journalists and involved in the sport in other ways such sponsored riders themselves; Rachael Gurney, Ed Hawthornthwaite, Juliet Elliott and James Mcknight.

Manon highlights the fact that more women need to get involved with the sport in order to enable women to have a bigger influence on the industry. This is part of the reason the issue of representation exists in the first place, and women are aware that they need bigger numbers to begin to change and influence things:

**What changes would you like to see for female riders in the next few years?**

“Above all I want to see more riders, more women riding for fun and more women racing. More women means a bigger market, more talent and more competition, making the racing more exciting and giving us a bigger influence within the industry.”  
(Manon Carpenter, former junior World Champion, racer for Madison Saracen).

Interestingly, Hannah discusses the fact that without the coverage, this has an effect on the amount of women coming into the sport. Without the coverage, and role models the numbers may not grow in future. However, she does discuss the benefits of publications created solely for women, thus creating a space for women in the MTB media, even if it isn't directly integrated into the popular publications:

**Do you think women's MTB gets enough coverage?**

“I don't think that it gets the coverage necessary to encourage more women to get riding, but this is changing. Looking at the States and Canada, women's riding is getting a lot more attention, and the UK is moving this way too with more

publications focused on all disciplines of women's cycling and dedicated events.” (Hannah Myers, women's MTB clothing designer, and owner of Flare Clothing).

Again, Rachael discusses the increase in coverage and how the women at the top of the sport are doing great things in terms of balanced coverage:

**Do you think female riders get fair/decent coverage from the industry?**

“I think female riders are getting more and more coverage these days, hopefully it will keep increasing. The likes of Rachel Atherton and Manon Carpenter have done wonders for the sport this past few months, I have definitely seen an increase in coverage of female bikers at all levels. I think decent coverage of female bikers can only keep increasing, I know that the guys out there love reading about, hearing about and watching us gals as much as we like to support each other.” (Rachael Gurney, sponsored mountain biker and MTB journalist).

Away from the issues of equal coverage, Juliet gives a great insight into the inner workings of how women are finding their own ways of reaching out to one another and providing a space for one another in male-dominated areas, as well as underlying issues into growth. She also highlights the fact that issues need to be readdressed, women need role models in order for continued growth and there is a long way to go before levels of participation are equal as there are things that get in the way of this:

**In your opinion, do you think more women are getting into action sports, and if so, what's the catalyst?**

“The internet has really helped by connecting like-minded women which helps to build communities and grow the industry. And I do see more women getting into action sports, but there's still an enormous way to go. Before the global financial crisis, more brands were investing in women's specific products, teams and events, but when everything went tits up, these were always the first to be dropped. We are seeing the fruits of those investments, certainly in women's skateboarding which has

grown a great deal in the last decade, but we'd have got a lot further if the investment had continued.

Girls need to see other women participating in sport in order for them to feel that it could be for them too. Kids are very impressionable, so if they don't have positive role models, or worse yet, get wind of the sexist attitudes that still prevail, what hope is there of women ever matching the men's level of participation?

It's a slow process, changing the attitude that these activities aren't for women. It's been drummed into us for so long that we're the weaker sex. I dream of the day where it would be totally, 100% normal for girls to ride skateparks, where no one bats an eyelid." (Juliet Elliott, sponsored rider, freelance journalist and editor of Coven Magazine).

Tahnee discusses a frustration for many women in the sport. That despite the fact they are doing exactly the same as the men, regardless of numbers, coverage and support is still unmatched. This again highlights that women are aware that there are less of them in the sport but also their frustrations due to the impact this has on their space within the media and the sport.

### **Would you say women get equal support and coverage in MTB compared to the guys?**

"Obviously not, but I definitely think it's getting better. Yes, people will say that there are a lot more guys and the competition is tighter, and they do go faster than girls but at the end of the day we fight for the win just as much as they do and put just as much effort in." (Tahnee Seagrave, Current Junior downhill World Champion).

Katy, again reiterates that without representation, women don't have role models like men do, and this has an impact, she also echoes the frustrations of many female athletes in MTB, despite the fact they are giving their all, this is often disregarded by the media:



“I think a lot of sports in general are always male-dominated. My thoughts on this is because of the media, when you look through the media, printed or visual, more than 90% of the athletes are male. I think for guys this is good as it gives them role models, the desire to achieve what they have but if women don't and can't see other females achieving highly in sports then they don't have anyone one to look up to. I think with decent coverage in more magazines and videos, this for one, will help massively. Sadly in most media coverage from 4X races women are barely featured if at all. It's annoying to see as speaking from a personal view I know I put my 110% into training and yet it feels like it kind of goes unnoticed. Over the last year, slowly more coverage for the girls racing has been creeping in to videos but I would love to see more. I understand the girls have less numbers so it's hard to give us a lot of coverage but the racing between us is still exciting and as close as the guys so why not feature us.” (Katy Curd, 3 time British 4X Champ and 2012 European 4X Champ).

There are recurring points throughout the interviews that many of the women discuss, including increasing coverage, concerns over growth and lack of role models, the internet being a platform for women to connect and create, the internet as a space for women within the MTB media and frustrations over the lack of coverage of their efforts. Rachel Atherton debates that although the media are getting better, there are still some things that need addressing, indicating that the growth of coverage may have to come from the women themselves:

**Honestly, what do you think of the mainstream MTB/cycling media and their coverage of female riders?**

“Regarding the cycling media and female riders I think it is improving dramatically. The skill level of female riders now is really legit and makes for amazing videos, which internet sites have really got a hold of. It's great to see the female riders being proud and putting out legit edits. The paper coverage is getting there too, adverts featuring women etc, again great to see and I'm sure it will improve as the supply and demand for women's products/coverage increases. One leads to the other. Racing coverage is still pretty terrible within a lot of paper MTB media... I am pretty

disappointed in race coverage, perhaps a sentence or two for the whole women's category? That's not acceptable and I intend to change that." (Rachel Atherton, current downhill World Champion, rider for GT Factory Racing).

Another point of view comes from, Ed Hawthornthwaite. He brings up the argument that women are a different market altogether, which may provide insight into why the MTB media don't cover certain things. He also argues that Dirt do in fact give women proportionate coverage when considering the amount of women compared to men and that the number of men is growing too:

**Why do you think women are given separate publications, rather than having things integrated?**

"Because they are in many ways a different audience/market. Saying that, I know several female riders who prefer to read 'male orientated' mags, simply because they feel mountain biking is mountain biking, and they don't feel the need for specific women's bikes etc. We feature very little clothing as it is, and certainly not really reviewed, so you could argue that Dirt is pretty much unisex."

**Is the rise of women participating in mountain biking adequately reflected in the media's coverage of the sport?**

"To be really honest, I actually think if you look at the percentages of male to female riders, and the percentage of male/female coverage in Dirt, I reckon we probably actually give a disproportionately large amount to female riders. Also, I don't doubt that the number of female riders is increasing, but is it increasing any more than for men? Those numbers are constantly growing too. So, I think it probably is adequately reflected, especially when you consider results like what just happened in Oz at the weekend. Those kinds of time gaps really shouldn't be happening, and certainly not if the depth of competition is supposedly improving." (Ed Hawthornthwaite, MTB journalist, Dirt Magazine).

In relation to this, James talks about MTB magazines in comparison to snowboard magazines, and discusses the fact that women seem to be better represented in those. He also indicates that the shift in attitudes may take time, and integration

should happen naturally:

“As long as the photos are rad it doesn't matter who's in the shots. I read loads of snow magazines and shots of girls riding snowboards are always just as rad as blokes. I guess it's all just a shift that takes a little time. I guess to integrate coverage, the main thing is not making a big deal of it or shouting that, "WE INCLUDE WOMEN IN OUR TITLE" but just to include women's stuff because it is only normal and natural and balanced to do so. Snowboard magazines, as I mentioned do it and MTB is getting 'normal' like snow sports so needs to get with the times. Everyone at Sea Otter was talking about women's being the 'growth area' of cycling. I guess in MTB at least there has just been far fewer women traditionally so now there's a lot more there should be more coverage in the media. Hopefully it'll be proportionate.” (James McKnight, MTB Journalist, Factory Media).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Survey discussion

It was apparent from the survey results that both men and women have the view that women aren't currently represented equally in the MTB media, overall these results indicate that people tend to think that the lack of coverage is potentially due to the number of women in relation to men. The general feeling from respondents regarding coverage is that they feel that it's mostly elite and well known female riders that get coverage. A few of the respondents also highlighted that they thought women tend to be represented better online than in print. There is also a general overview that the coverage is improving and could in fact be seen as proportionate based on the number of women in the sport.

When asked when they last saw a women featured online or in an MTB mag a theme began to emerge. When looking at the results from the men's survey it was apparent that they had noticed well known racers and athletes such as Rachel Atherton, Tracy Moseley, Manon Carpenter and Hannah Barnes. Similarly, the women also mentioned seeing the big names in the sport, Katy Curd, Rachel Atherton, Manon and Tracy Moseley. Other than the well known women in the sport,

respondents mentioned small amounts of coverage and not being able to remember seeing anything in a while. In the eyes of many respondents, mountain biking is an activity for everyone and gender shouldn't come into consideration where coverage is concerned.

Despite men being the target audience of most of the well-known publications, the general consensus from the sample indicated that the men didn't have a preference for gender when it came to what they saw in magazines and online, they also wouldn't be put off from buying MTB magazines because there was a woman on the front cover. In fact many of the respondents were interested in reading about women and wanted interesting coverage, regardless of who it was about.

Both men and women are aware that there have been improvements in coverage, and there continue to be improvements, and are also aware that editorial, advertising and the number of males in comparison to women in the sport play a huge part in what is covered.

### 5.3 Interview discussion

The interviews acted as a backup for the findings in the survey. They provided another insight into the issues from people who were in the position to comment on them having experienced them first-hand, or from being involved in them in one capacity or another. They gave another perspective on the representation of women in the mountain biking media, allowed understanding into attitudes and content, and presented a look at the role of the media industry in the representation of women. It also gave an indication of what research may need to take place in future to evaluate this study in more depth.

## 6 Conclusion

This study set out to assess whether the rise of women participating in mountain biking was adequately reflected in the media's coverage of the sport, it also aimed to investigate:

1. Changes in attitudes and content, and the role of the media industry in the representation of women.
2. The potential outlook for change, if things have changed as well as examining what participants themselves think of current coverage.

Based on the little research that's available regarding mountain biking, and because of the perceived masculine persona, arguably a proportion of the media feel that women don't have a place within that. Aside from covering the top women, the MTB media don't provide enough coverage in leading publications for other women, but instead, to cater for the female audience, women's specific publications such as 'Total Women's Cycling' and magazines like 'Women's Cycling' have been launched and are run by women for women. Whilst this isn't a bad thing as evidently women are reading it because it gives them something when there's nothing available to them, a lot of women also want something that's less geared towards 'newbies' and they need the opinions and expertise of people in the sport. One reason this may not be happening yet, is due to the fact there are less females working in the industry and men are unable to accommodate for the female audience in circumstances such as reviewing kit.

It is evident that beginning to integrate additional reviews for women's kit etc. into magazines would be a good start. Publishers and advertisers should realise the potential growth that could result if they begin to do so. As most of the women's coverage is in fact provided by women, again as discussed above, this could be one reason the coverage of women is not yet proportionate. As discussed in the research, one of the main reasons is essentially down to numbers, though arguably women already in the sport shouldn't be denied a space within the MTB media because of this, it has been known to happen, but the audience has shown a willingness for change and attitudes may continue to shift as the sport itself continues to develop and women's participation continues to rise.

Many women have expressed the need for role models, and disregarding the female portion of the MTB audience because of its size could have consequences for growth in the future and causes feelings of separation. Whilst this study has shown

that although industry personnel, riders, athletes and the audience think coverage has improved, there is a general feeling that it isn't good enough despite developments. There is also a minority that concluded that the representation of women is in fact adequately proportionate based on the number of women in the sport, and whilst this study doesn't give an overview of the whole MTB population, it has given insight into the issues addressed both in this study, and those discussed in the literature.

While the issue stems from more than just editorial decisions, it may also be based on the audience, advertising, sponsorship and marketing amongst others, and can't be pinpointed exactly. There are a number of different elements that impact the representation and coverage of women in the MTB media, arguably 'the media' itself would need to be looked at in more depth, as this study has only looked into the issues regarding magazine and online.

Again there are many things that need to be evaluated further in addition in this study, but in terms of adequate coverage based on the rise in participants, the overall perception is things are slowly improving, that all women need to be given a space within the MTB media, increased coverage should see increased participation, the changes are being led by women, women need role models and coverage in order for the sport to grow, the majority of men are enthusiastic about providing women a space within the MTB media, and mountain biking in its purity is about the sport, not gender.

## Appendix 1

### Women's Survey Questions

Q1: What is your age? (16 to 18, 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74, 75 or older)

Q2: Do you think women are represented equally in the mainstream MTB media (Pinkbike, Dirt, Vital MTB, MBUK etc)?

Q3: When can you last remember seeing a women featured in a MTB mag or online, where was it and was it a big or small feature? (cover, small news piece, feature, interview, etc)

Q4: Why, if there is a rise in females participating in MTB is this not reflected within the media industry? What are your views and ideas on this?

Q5: Do you think that the rise in women's specific media (Total women's cycling, women's cycling etc) Is a good thing, or would you rather have the coverage integrated into other things to the scale it is on the women's sites/mags?

Q6: Which MTB magazines/websites do you enjoy reading and why?

Q7: Do you think women are featured less often due to the amount of women in the sport, or is this an editorial thing, due to the majority of staff being male?

Q8: What do you think can be done to improve equality within cycling and MTB for women?

Q9: How long have you been riding? (6 months to a year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 4-6 year, 6-10 years, 10+ years)

Q10: Do you have any further comments on the representation of women in MTB? (If you wish to be entered into a competition to win a £20 chain reaction voucher, please leave your email)

### Men's Survey Questions

Q1: What is your age? (16 to 18, 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74, 75 or older)

Q2: Do you think women are represented equally in the mainstream MTB media (Pinkbike, Dirt, Vital MTB, MBUK etc)?

Q3: When can you last remember seeing a women featured in a MTB mag or online, where was it and was it a big or small feature? (cover, small news piece, feature, interview, etc)

Q4: Are you interested in reading about female riders, if not why?

Q5: Do you think women get equal coverage to the men, and if not why do you think this is?

Q6: Recently, Manon Carpenter was on the cover of Wideopen Magazine, and Rachel Atherton was on the cover of Dirt Magazine, would this put you off buying the magazine, or is it not an issue?

Q7: Based on the assumption you have been reading MTB news online and in magazines for the past few years (MBUK, Dirt, Pinkbike, Vital etc) would you say the

coverage of women has... (Increased, decreased, stayed the same, not sure/don't know)

Q8: How long have you been riding? (6 months to a year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 4-6 year, 6-10 years, 10+ years)

Q9: Which Magazines/Websites do you read and why?

Q10: If you wish to be entered into a competition to win a £20 chain reaction voucher, please leave your email below!

## Appendix 2

### Some of the Responses from women: Survey question 7

Q7: Do you think women are featured less often due to the amount of women in the sport, or is this an editorial thing, due to the majority of staff being male?

Not editorial, just perceived as less interesting

4/15/2014 9:43 PM

Look at the numbers and variety of categories for women at DH events, only a fraction of the men's.

4/8/2014 5:59 PM

I think it's both of those reasons, some - not all men think women shouldn't and cannot ride mountain bikes. I've lost count of the number of times a man I don't know has insisted on going in front and then got in my way and been majorly shocked when they realise I am being held up by them.

4/8/2014 4:31 PM

Less women participate in the sport, many male features apply equally to women

4/7/2014 9:34 PM

Probably a male thing. Seen as a male sport generally.

4/7/2014 9:33 PM

Not sure maybe both but more because there are more men who mountain bike and spend money on it.

4/7/2014 7:59 PM



It is in part due to fewer women in the sport, there are other factors, but this is the main one.

4/7/2014 5:19 PM

Male writers, maybe they should talk more to us and get proper interviews after races.

4/7/2014 4:48 PM

Yes, they feature less, because there are less of us in sports and hence smaller market.

4/7/2014 1:59 PM

Probably because it is male dominated and there aren't as many women compared to men cycling.

4/7/2014 1:24 PM

A bit of both. Unfortunately women in mountain biking generally get noticed by these male dominated magazines are there because of their appearance and not necessarily the level of skill they have so I suppose that is down to a male staff thing.

4/7/2014 11:52 AM

I think it's due to the amount of women and the results women are getting. There's not much to say about them. I think male attitude has changed in recent years & don't think it is an issue.

4/7/2014 8:51 AM

I think it's because photos of women aren't as gnarly, often when a video of a woman riding is posted you get snide remarks on it, despite the fact that guys are genuinely impressed when they see girls riding in reality they seem to have a completely different attitude when it comes to media

4/6/2014 10:55 PM

I think that the writers have less choice in what to write about women due to the noticeable difference between male and female in the sport and men are so used to riding with other men I think that the thought of women riding doesn't come as a first thought to them.

4/6/2014 10:53 PM

I think women are featured less because a lot of men don't want to look at what the girls are doing unless they are bending over to lube their chain. The other men are quite optimistic about girls racing and riding, but would probably watch sam reynolds new vid over an edit of manon carpenter.

4/6/2014 8:38 PM

No, there are an ever increasing amount of ladies on the trails, its a marketing thing, what will sell ect..

4/6/2014 8:12 PM

Probably more to do with the companies advertising in these magazines. If they can shift more stock (which is male oriented) they'll want a more male audience. And more male athletes to draw that audience, especially when they can explain how rad a piece of equipment is.

Most men are wholly supportive of women in sport but if there is no demand there is often less coverage.

4/6/2014 12:53 PM

Both, there are less women in the sport but the interesting ones still don't get the coverage they deserve.

4/6/2014 10:49 AM

I think it is probably because there are less women out there, although as numbers are growing I hope this changes.

4/6/2014 10:44 AM

Partly the amount, partly we're stuck in a "male profession" of being a professional athlete.

4/6/2014 10:11 AM

I think it's due to the amount of women in the sport

4/6/2014 9:45 AM

I would say it's the latter - proportionally I see a lot of women out on the trail. Still less than men, but not as rare as magazines seem to think. I guess part of the problem is also convincing advertisers of women's buying power.

4/6/2014 9:13 AM

Percentage involvement and lack of women reporters.

4/6/2014 8:42 AM

I think it's because there are less women than men who mountain bike. Therefore the media have to cater for that target market.

4/6/2014 8:39 AM

I think a combination of both. I actually think Rachel Atherton got a decent amount of coverage following her. World Cup win last year.

4/6/2014 7:20 AM

Not sure. Possibly a cultural thing?

4/6/2014 6:41 AM

It's both. These changes take so much time especially when battling old backwards ingrained ideas.

4/6/2014 6:13 AM

Staff being male and lack of thought for women.

4/6/2014 2:43 AM

Numbers of participants are increasing so there's no real excuse. Also male bias for sure!

4/6/2014 2:41 AM

A bit of both factors at play. I've noticed most of the articles written about womens riding are written by women. Such as the fantastic Women's Wednesdays on Wideopen

4/5/2014 11:55 PM

Magazines are also targeted at male audience so lack of female presence/ ladies specific kit reviewed in the magazines

4/5/2014 11:41 PM

All down to less of us in the sport

4/5/2014 11:29 PM

I agree with both these statements, I remember being told by one of the guys who owns transition "Just because Rachel Atherton is smashing it on a GT doesn't mean I want to go out and buy one, if Gee was smashing it then I would be more tempted"

4/5/2014 11:03 PM

Both. I think that there is a proportional relationship but it could also be to do with the perceptions of the editorial staff and sexualisation of women in extreme sports in general

4/5/2014 11:00 PM

This is a good question?! I would like to say it's due to less women in the sport but think it's a hugely male dominated industry which must sway coverage massively!

4/5/2014 10:51 PM

I think a higher percentage of readers are male and I would prefer for women to be represented slightly less than represented in a derogatory way

4/5/2014 10:50 PM

I think it's a combination but as more women get noticed they are being featured more and more.

4/5/2014 10:39 PM

Probably the latter. Research should be done into how much men want to read about women within media.

4/5/2014 10:39 PM

An editorial thing. But also a reluctance of females to be featured in the media mainly because of male dominance.

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