

Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

MEDIA & MARKETING | December 20, 2012, 7:15 p.m. ET

# Gun Companies Add More Marketing to Women

By JAMES R. HAGERTY

As gun makers have tried to increase sales to women, online retailers have pitched in with clothing and other products that depict firearms as fashion accessories.

But the marketing of guns is coming under closer scrutiny because of public revulsion over the Dec. 14 shootings of 26 students and staff members at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn.



Pistols and Pumps

Online retailers are pitching an array of gun fashions to women. Here, an image of Pistols & Pumps website

### Related Video



In its 141st year, the NRA has risen to become one of America's most powerful lobby groups. Now the

The website for the National Rifle Association's NRA Women's Network provides links to online retailers offering an array of fashion, ranging from camouflage outfits for hunting to pink Flash Bang bra holsters and tight "compression" shorts with built in gun holders. Some of the sites offer bullet jewelry or jokey T-shirts with slogans like "P.M.S. (Packin' My Sidearm)." The NRA didn't respond to requests for comment.

The Women's Network is sponsored by [Smith & Wesson Holding Corp.](#), a gun maker whose chief executive officer, P. James Debney, recently told investors that women were "a growing consumer segment" in the gun market. Mr. Debney and the company didn't respond to requests for comment.

Whether sexual or humorous marketing should be toned down or eliminated in light of the shock caused by that event is up for debate.

"It's a very complicated question," said Windy Borders, a co-owner of Pistols & Pumps LLC, in Lake Ozark, Mo., which sells clothing with the

NRA is responding to a massacre that has President Obama advocating for more stringent gun control. WSJ's Jason Bellini reports. Image: Getty

slogan "Concealed and High Heeled" and logos showing a woman in pink silhouetted against a handgun. Whether to change any of the products or pitches is "something maybe we can discuss,"

she said.

Ms. Border's partner, Vicki Amormino, said she saw no need to change the products. The idea is to show women "this is a friendly place" for them, she said, noting that all sorts of businesses use sex or humor as sales tools. But the two partners, both mothers of school-age children, said the lessons of the Newtown murders might prompt them to put more stress on gun-safety education on their site.

Josh Sugarmann, executive director of the Violence Policy Center, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that favors stricter gun controls, said marketing of guns and related products to women "denies the risk" that arises from having guns in the home. In Newtown, Adam Lanza killed his mother, Nancy, with one of her own guns, according to the police.

Athena Means, who operates an online shop called GunGoddess.com, based in Las Vegas, said that offering "cute gear" for women serves an important purpose: "getting the gun off the night stand and out to the [shooting] range" for practice. Attractive clothing and accessories encourage women to get training and meet other women who own guns, Ms. Means said.

Cole Kelly, who operates the armedinheels.com site, featuring the P.M.S. T-shirts and Flash Bang bra holsters, said: "We have very little sex appeal on our site." Instead, Mr. Kelly said, "we're all about the empowering of women through self-defense products."

Mr. Kelly, who runs his business out of his home in Gilbert, Ariz., said the bra holsters are purely functional. Because their bodies are shaped differently, he said, men and women need different ways to conceal guns.

The retailers say holiday-gift orders for their goods have been very strong. "I am slammed," said Ms. Means of GunGoddess.com.

**Write to James R. Hagerty at [bob.hagerty@wsj.com](mailto:bob.hagerty@wsj.com)**

*A version of this article appeared December 21, 2012, on page B5 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: Gun Companies Add More Marketing to Women.*

Copyright 2012 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit

[www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)