Fashion model Heidi Klum earned $7.5 million in 2005, and several other top female models earned even more, topped by Gisele Bündchen at more than $15 million. Five female supermodels made *Forbes* Magazine's list of the one hundred highest-paid celebrities that year. No male models made the list. Why are the top female models paid so much more?

To answer this question, we must first ask what fashion models accomplish for the clothing producers who hire them. Simply put, their job is to make the manufacturer's apparel look as good as possible to prospective buyers. Since most clothing looks better on attractive people, manufacturers seek out the best-looking male and female models for their photo shoots. So among both male and female models, the
better-looking models are generally paid more. And since society has its own standard of beauty for each sex, it makes little sense to say that female models are paid more because they are better-looking than their male counterparts.

Female models receive premium pay because women's fashion is a vastly bigger business than men's fashion. Women in the United States, for example, spend more than twice as much on clothing each year as men do, and the difference is even more pronounced in other countries. With such large sums at stake, bidding aggressively for the model who best conveys the look of the moment makes economic sense for manufacturers of women's clothing. Widely read fashion magazines such as Vogue and Elle have enormous influence on women's clothing and cosmetics purchases. Each issue contains photographs of hundreds or even thousands of female models. Those who can capture the reader's attention against that crowded backdrop are worth their weight in gold. So it is easy to see why manufacturers might be willing to bid a lot more for a model who stands out even slightly from the field.

The value added by hiring a better-looking male model pales by comparison. Few men could even name a men's fashion magazine, and fewer still read one. The clothing manufacturer that hires a slightly better-looking male model will sell additional garments, but not nearly as many more as the one that hires a slightly better-looking female model.

Women are also hired to model cosmetics, and here too the payoff from hiring a more striking model can be enormous. Because most men don't wear cosmetics, few male models participate in that segment of the labor market.