

SPORTFIVE

DIGITAL WHITEPAPER



THE RISE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

A MOVEMENT, NOT A MOMENT

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL CONCEPT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Below is an executive summary of the key findings and recommendations uncovered across the report. Read on to find out more, or click on the headers to take you to the relevant section.

FANS →

OUR FINDINGS

Interest in women's football is growing and attracting a unique set of fans. These fans are drawn to the sport's distinctive character and values, which typically attracts a younger, more

gender balanced audience, who have a high purchasing power and engagement; making them invaluable to stakeholders.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

A unique audience requires a unique approach. Rightsholders, media platforms and brands need to invest in research to help them create bespoke

strategies that specifically fit women's football and its fans.

MEDIA →

OUR FINDINGS

The women's football media ecosystem faces a number of challenges, including consistency and accessibility of live broadcasts, low production

quality and non-tailored programme formatting. Despite this, there are promising signs that could prove to be the way forward.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Utilise national team exposure and find the magic formula to balance reach vs revenue, invest in production quality to attract and sustain audiences, and adapt rights packages to women's football's unique fanbase.

THE NATIONAL TEAM

Is the most common reason for women's football fans to become a fan

PLAYERS →

OUR FINDINGS

A shift in generational consumer behaviours have turned professional athletes into marketing platforms in their own right. Female football players

are particularly influential through their growing roles in society and strong influence on social media and brands are taking note.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

To brands: Keep investing in players and their platforms, and adapt messages towards more traditional sports-led marketing as the sport grows so as to avoid women's sports washing.

To media: Younger audiences are often showing a greater interest in individual players compared to teams or leagues and with the women's football media environment facing challenges to capture sustained audiences, more player focused content could be a solution.

To rightsholders: Listen to, recognise and reward players for their role in growing the game.

BRANDS →

OUR FINDINGS

Commercial income has a disproportionate level of importance within the women's game. Brands have

identified a gap in the market, allowing for lower entry costs and higher returns on investment.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

To brands: Capitalise on this moment whilst you can. Women's football will grow and sponsorship costs will rise, investing earlier will strongly position you amongst a values-driven fanbase.

To rightsholders: Understand your fans, understand your market, speak to brands and assess how you value your women's rights - decide on a (un)bundling strategy.

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

Click on the header to read the Market Spotlight section, or click on a country to access market specific data.

- ▶ AUSTRALIA
- ▶ FRANCE
- ▶ GERMANY
- ▶ SPAIN
- ▶ UK
- ▶ USA

01

PREFACE

Women's football has evolved from a burgeoning interest to a global phenomenon, experiencing unprecedented growth and capturing the hearts of millions worldwide. At SPORTFIVE, we have been privileged to witness and contribute to this remarkable journey, leveraging our expertise to foster and accelerate the sport's development. Now, more than ever, is the opportune moment to invest in and champion women's football, capitalizing on its dynamic ascent.

This whitepaper is a testament to our commitment to women's football. We delve into its rich history, analyse the current commercial landscape and identify future opportunities. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive roadmap for brands, rightsholders, media platforms and fans to navigate and contribute to the sport's flourishing ecosystem.

At SPORTFIVE, we believe that sport has the power to unite people, inspire communities and create positive change. Our mission is to bring people together through the power of sports while also driving industry growth and innovation. We are dedicated to collaborating with our partners, clients and stakeholders to create a better future for our people and communities. Together, we strive to

create a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable world through the transformative power of sport.

Women's football exemplifies this transformative power, breaking barriers and inspiring communities worldwide. The sport's rapid ascent is not merely a trend but a testament to its enduring appeal and potential. The recent surge in viewership, sponsorship and grassroots participation underlines a pivotal moment in sports history. The convergence of increased media coverage, corporate investment and societal shifts towards gender equality has created a fertile ground for women's football to flourish.

We invite you to join us in shaping the future of this movement. The time to act is now and crucially, together.



STEFAN FELSING
CEO, SPORTFIVE



”

Over the past 10, 20, 30 years, women's football has been transformed from a game in the shadows to one of the most popular sports in the world.

With the world now watching, women's football is ready to take off to even

greater heights.

JILL SCOTT,
ENGLAND MIDFIELDER 2006-2022

02

INTRODUCTION

Women's football is undergoing an unparalleled period of growth. Recent years have seen the sport completely transformed; tens of thousands of fans regularly pack stadiums, club and international matches are consistently broadcasted to both paying and free-to-air platforms, female footballers are becoming global superstars and commercialisation is growing in all areas of the game.

This upwards trajectory was sparked by the convergence of a number of interconnected developments in the sport and the blossoming years since have seen women's football prove that it is more than just a moment, it's a movement.

In 2024, women's football is thought to have become the most valuable women's sport in the world, with an estimated global yearly revenue of over €500 million, accounting for more than 45% of the total revenue of women's sport worldwide⁶.

Whilst these numbers only account for a fraction of the revenue generated in the men's game, which reached €38 billion in Europe alone for the same period⁸, the year-on-year growth of revenue in women's football is indicative of a rapidly growing industry. Since 2021, the women's sport industry has

seen its global revenues increase by more than 300%⁵ - comparatively, the men's European football market has risen by 24% for the same period⁸.

SPORTFIVE has been working in women's sport since the 1990s and has witnessed and been a part of the transformative changes that the industry has undergone ever since. With recent years seeing football emerge as the leader of the women's sport revolution, we wanted to delve deeper into some of the driving factors behind this growth through an analytical report of the industry.

In the following whitepaper, we will uncover the current commercial factors that are shaping women's football, as well outlining the opportunities and lessons that can be learnt from the sport's early adopters.

Before this, we will delve into the history of women's football to understand how the sport's past will have a major part in shaping its future and how the growth we are seeing today is less of a revolution and more of a renaissance.

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IS MORE THAN JUST A MOMENT, IT IS A MOVEMENT

”

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IS NOT A COPY OF MEN'S FOOTBALL, NOR SHOULD IT BE. IT IS IT'S OWN UNIQUE PRODUCT AND IT IS GROWING RELENTLESSLY.

JESSICA STOMMEL, SALES DIRECTOR AND WOMEN'S FOOTBALL LEAD GERMANY, SPORTFIVE

”

THE GROWTH, THE SCALE, THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IS CLEAR. NOW BRANDS, RIGHTSHOLDERS AND MEDIA PLATFORMS NEED TO INVEST.

ELERI GUY, DIRECTOR GLOBAL ATHLETES AND WOMEN'S SPORT CO-LEAD, SPORTFIVE

”

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL HAS WITNESSED REMARKABLE GROWTH, WITH EACH GAME PLAYED, AND EVERY STORY SHARED, PAVING THE WAY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF PLAYERS. AS THE WORLD RECOGNIZES THE POWER, PASSION, AND SKILL OF WOMEN ON THE FIELD, THE SPORT BECOMES NOT JUST A GAME, BUT A PLATFORM FOR CHANGE, EQUALITY, AND EMPOWERMENT.

SHONA YOUNG, SENIOR MANAGER GLOBAL MEDIA AND WOMEN'S SPORT CO-LEAD, SPORTFIVE

03

| METHODOLOGY

This whitepaper seeks to map out the growth, change and opportunity in women's football by unpacking its multifaceted commercial landscape. To achieve this, we will examine the key components that are driving development in the game by conducting

comprehensive research into women's football fans and sponsors, as well as conducting an in-depth review and analysis of the industry's media platforms and players.

**THROUGH THIS BODY OF
WORK, WE AIM TO HELP
BRANDS,
RIGHTSHOLDERS,
MEDIA PLATFORMS
AND FANS
UNDERSTAND THE VALUE
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL.**



METHODOLOGY

SPORTFIVE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL BRAND SPONSORSHIP RESEARCH 2025

+1,600

SPONSORS ACROSS SIX MAJOR WOMEN'S DOMESTIC LEAGUES WERE ANALYSED:



SPORTFIVE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FAN SURVEY 2025

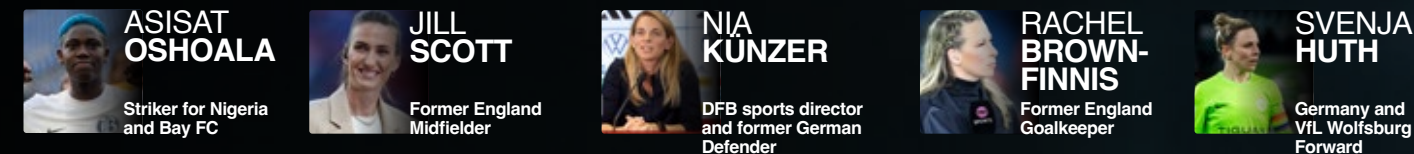
12,000

RESPONDENTS WERE SURVEYED ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ACROSS AUSTRALIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, SPAIN, UK AND USA

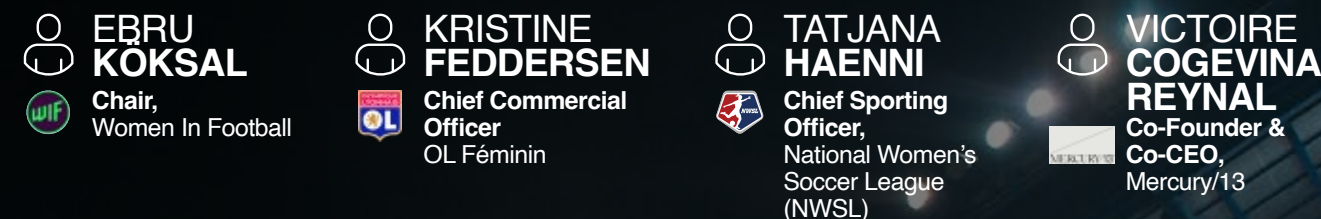
NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY FOR THE AGE GROUP 16-64:



PLAYERS



RIGHTSHOLDERS



ACADEMICS



SPORTFIVE EXPERTS



04

THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

There is an overarching acceptance from people involved in women's football that it is different to the men's game, and even different to most other sports.

This whitepaper shows that women's football differs from its male counterpart on a number of key factors, including attracting different types of fans, who engage and view the sport in less traditional ways, fostering players with more engaging personalities and creating a completely unique fan experience.

These factors will be explored in more depth in the coming sections, but before analysing how the women's game differs from the men's, it's important to look at why.

In the following section we will unpack the history of women's football and explore the impact it is having on the industry today.

Football has been played in a wide range of forms for millennia, with the earliest account of women playing a football-like sport being found in China, around the year 800¹⁷.

The modern game of football, officially named Association Football, was founded in England, in 1863²². The early years of the sport saw both men and women play as the game grew and spread to countries around the world in the early 20th century²⁷.

The history of women's football since then can be characterised by three distinctive periods of growth, referred to in the following pages as 'booms', as well as a multi decade ban on women playing the sport in many countries around the world.



THE EARLY BOOM (1880S - 1921)

1881

The first recorded women's football match took place in front of a crowd of over 2,000 fans in Edinburgh.⁴⁶

1895

The British Ladies' Football Club is formed and is thought to be one of the first ever women's football clubs.⁴⁶

1914-1918

The First World War shifts perceptions of women's football as women join factories. Matches, played as pastimes and exhibitions, draw tens of thousands of spectators.

1919

Women's football starts to grow outside the British Isles with notable teams and leagues forming in Spain and France^{49, 53}.

1921

More than 150 women's football clubs have been formed in the UK⁴⁶ and Australia holds its first public women's football match in front of a crowd of more than 10,000 people¹⁹.



DICK, KERR LADIES FO
1917 - 1965





...THE GAME OF
FOOTBALL IS QUITE
UNSUITABLE FOR
FEMALES AND OUGHT
NOT BE ENCOURAGED

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION, 1921

THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

THE BAN (1921-1970s)

In December 1921, the English Football Association banned women's football matches from being played at professional grounds and pitches affiliated to The FA, stating "...the game of football is quite unsuitable for females and ought not to be encouraged."⁴⁶

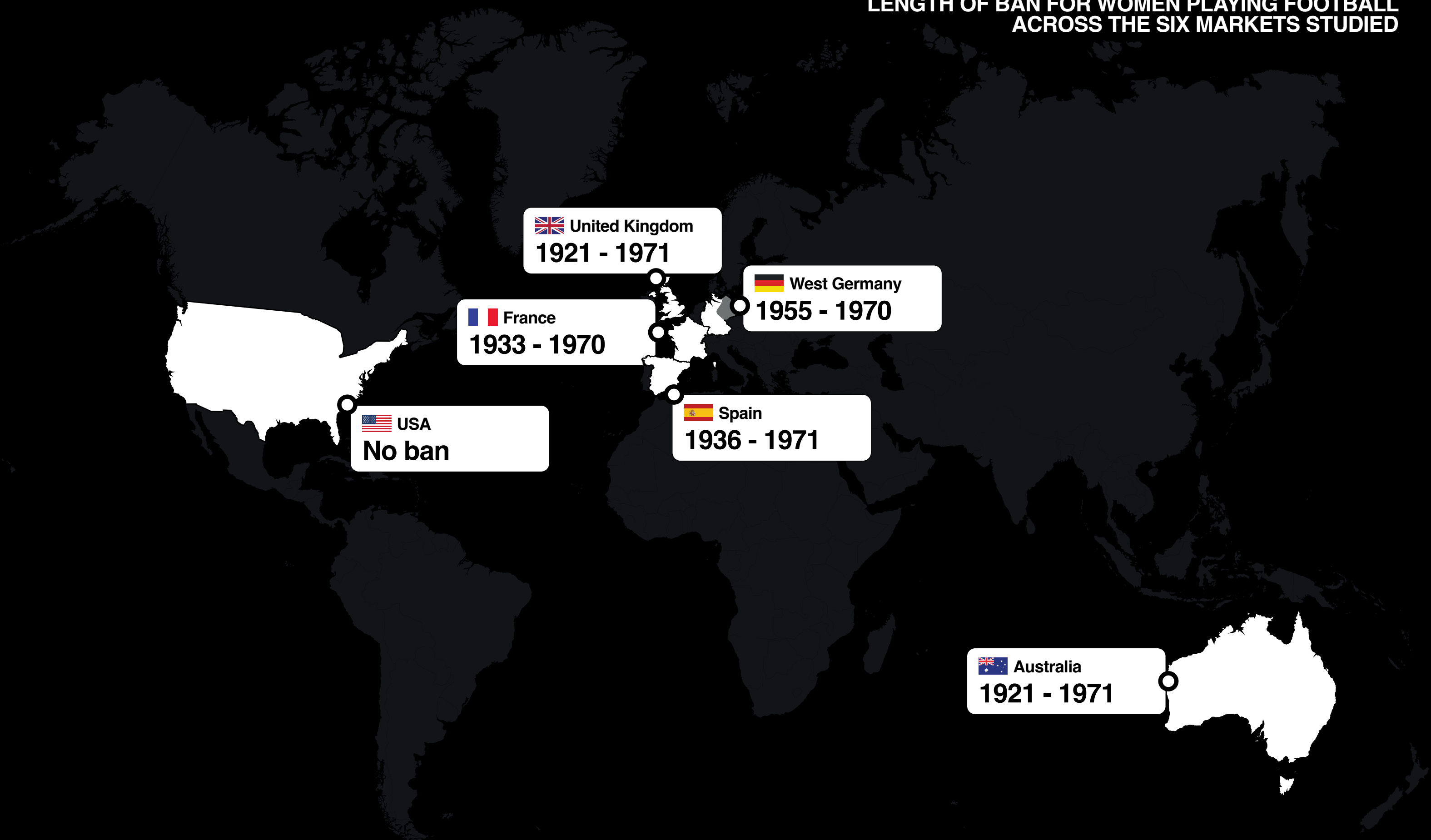
Although the ban from The FA only restricted women in England from playing football, the notion to stop women from playing organised matches spread and became prevalent in most football-playing countries around the world.

The long-term effects of this multi-decade ban on women's football are still being felt to this day. Research shows that the sport's development was severely hindered⁵¹, with the women's game prevented from being able to grow in the same way as the men's, which saw remarkable growth in almost every area, including participation, attendances and income³⁷.

THE BAN (1921-1970s)

THE GAME STOPS

LENGTH OF BAN FOR WOMEN PLAYING FOOTBALL
ACROSS THE SIX MARKETS STUDIED



THE GLOBAL BOOM (1970s-ONGOING)

1969

FIFA and UEFA reconsider their view of not recognising women's football, and in 1971 UEFA suggest that women's football should be placed under the control of national associations in each country.³⁶

1970s & 1980s

Under new reform, women's football begins to reestablish itself. Despite severe lack of funding, women's national football teams, competitions and the first semi-professional league is formed.⁵²

1972

Title IX, a landmark US law, bans sex-based discrimination in education, transforming women's sports by boosting participation and funding.

1991

The first FIFA Women's World Cup is held in China, a major milestone for the game.

1999

Fresh off the back of hosting the 1994 FIFA Men's World Cup and the 1996 Summer Olympics, the USA hosted the then largest FIFA Women's World Cup, with 1.2 millions fans in attendance¹².



THE GLOBAL BOOM (1999-ONGOING)

1999 FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP FACTS

OVERALL ATTENDANCE

1,194,215¹²

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE

37,319¹²

MEDIA COVERAGE

32 MATCHES WERE TELEVISED
FOR THE FIRST TIME ON
DISNEY-OWNED ABC, ESPN
AND ESPN2²⁸



THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

THE COMMERCIAL BOOM (2015 - ONGOING)

The decades that followed saw greater public interest in not only women's football, but women's sport as a whole.

Major events, including the Olympic Games played a particularly important role in building awareness, visibility and interest in women's sport during this time. Research suggests that the Olympic Games provides one of the few occasions where elite male and female athletes are given a more equal treatment in terms of media coverage⁵⁶.

This was taken to new heights during the London 2012 Olympics Games, where, for the first time in history, every single participating country had at least one female athlete⁵ and there were an equal number of sports for men and women²⁰.

The growing global interest in female sport had a significant impact on what has been described as a 'new age' of women's football³³. Research differs as to when this new age began, but it has been argued that this was first initiated shortly after the London 2012 Olympic Games, during the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup, when a substantial shift in positive media coverage of women's football occurred³².

With 556 million people tuning in for at least three minutes of coverage - a 36% increase on the 2011 tournament - the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup proved that the world was watching women's football and gave a glimpse of its commercial potential.

The global interest in the game has become clearer to see with the passing of each major tournament (see Figure 1 on the following page), but it's not just fan interest and media coverage that has driven this growth.

The role of individual athletes in building long-term interest and loyalty has been well documented²¹ and as media coverage of women's football has increased, female football players are using their platforms to help grow the game.

“

Women's football will be forever shaped by its shadowed past, and as the sport continues to grow it's vital to remember how we got to where we are today.

RACHEL BROWN-FINNIS, ENGLAND GOALKEEPER 1997-2013

Here, players influence in different ways, including hands-on campaigning to drive societal change, raising awareness for the game as a whole through community initiatives and their social media channels, as well as generating income through commercial partnerships with brands.

The role of brands and the growing number of commercial partnerships in women's football has perhaps had the most significant impact on the sport's expansion in recent years, with research from Deloitte showing that 55% of the global revenue generated from women's sports is attributed to commercial income³.

Together, the increased fan interest, the shift in positive media coverage, the transformation of players into global superstars and the growth of commercialisation have seen women's football rise from 50 years of enforced obscurity to becoming one of the world's most followed sports.

In this paper, we will explore these four driving factors in greater detail.



“

When I started my career, full stadiums were a rarity in women's soccer in Germany. Today, we can feel the atmosphere on the pitch growing from game to game - that gives us incredible energy. But it's about more than just full stands: we are fighting for real equality so that future generations have the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

SVENJA HUTH, GERMANY AND VFL WOLFSBURG FORWARD

THE COMMERCIAL BOOM (2015 - ONGOING)

FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP GROWTH

Global TV Viewership Figures

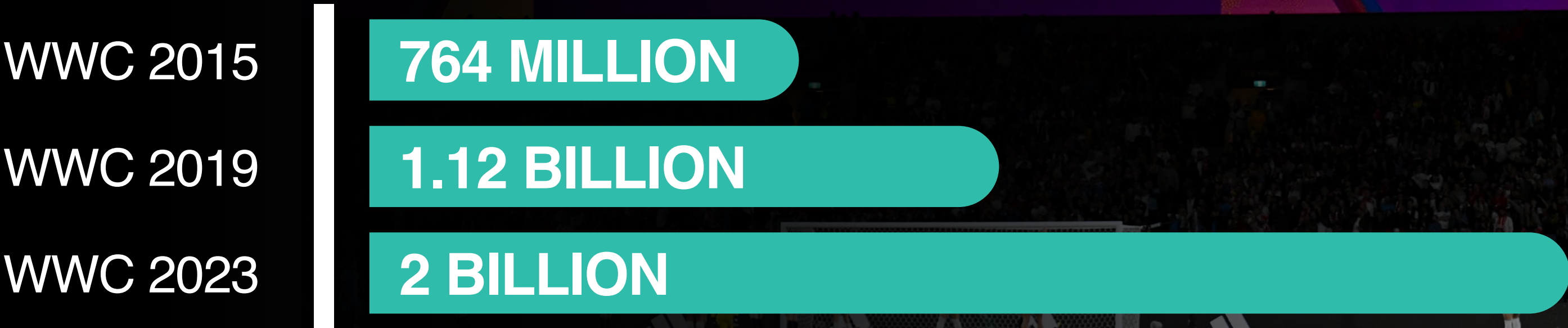


FIGURE 1

Prize Pool



FIFA Total Revenue



05

THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Assessing the commercial and business side of sport can sometimes feel strange. On the one hand you have sport, an emotionally charged game that calls upon physical exercise or skill to win, on the other, business, a matter of fact and transactional practice where winning is defined by profit margins. For most of human history these two worlds were kept apart, sport as a leisurely pastime and business as a financial necessity for an increasingly industrial society.

Today, sport and business go hand in hand; professional sports teams employ both performance coaches and financial analysts, leagues and federations spend as much time trying to improve their sport as they do maximising their revenues, and athletes' online persona can be just as important as their on-field percentages.

This commercial shift has seen the elite sports industry demonstrate its ability to compete, contribute and collaborate with leading global industries, acting as a catalyst for economic and social development by connecting global communities, creating job opportunities, and delivering financial value for its stakeholders.

The sport industry's relatively new switch (compared to other major global industries) to a more business focused approach has however come with its challenges. Despite global fan interest and soaring revenues, there are a lot of teams, leagues and competitions that struggle to make a profit - even in the Premier League, the most followed sports league in the world, only three out of its 20 teams made a profit in the 2022/23 season². It's against this backdrop that we analyse the commercial landscape of women's football.

The growth potential for women's football is there for all to see. Football is the most watched sport in the world, generating over \$56b in annual revenue⁴³, but arguably only half of the market is being utilised to its full potential.

Critics of the business side of the women's game point to similar issues as with the men's, far too many rightsholder are failing to make a profit, particularly outside of the North American franchise model, where the uncertainties of promotion, relegation and continental football add to the risk. Supporters of the women's game and its commercial potential underline the industry's revenue growth trajectory whilst also seeing women's football as an opportunity to learn from the mistakes made in the men's game and build a long-term, self-sustainable future for the sport. Whether you're a critic or a supporter, or somewhere inbetween, the growing popularity of women's football is evident, and as men's football has shown us, where there are eyeballs, there is revenue potential.

But having spent more than 50 years in the dark, women's football is understandably behind men's football in almost every commercial aspect. The women's game should not however be seen as the men's game minus 50 years, nor should they be seen as estranged twins destined to follow the same path. Women's football is less of a twin and more of a sibling and has its own unique story to tell.

In the following section, we review and analyse four of the key factors that we believe will shape the commercial chapter of this story.

”

Women's football is a global movement reshaping sports. With every match, it attracts more fans, top sponsors, and breaks barriers. Its rise redefines the game, creates opportunities, and inspires future generations.

ROBERT MÜLLER VON VULTEJUS, CGO SPORTFIVE



In many ways, the commercial landscape of women's football is viewed akin to that of a start-up industry, mainly because it inevitably gets compared to the mature market for men's football.

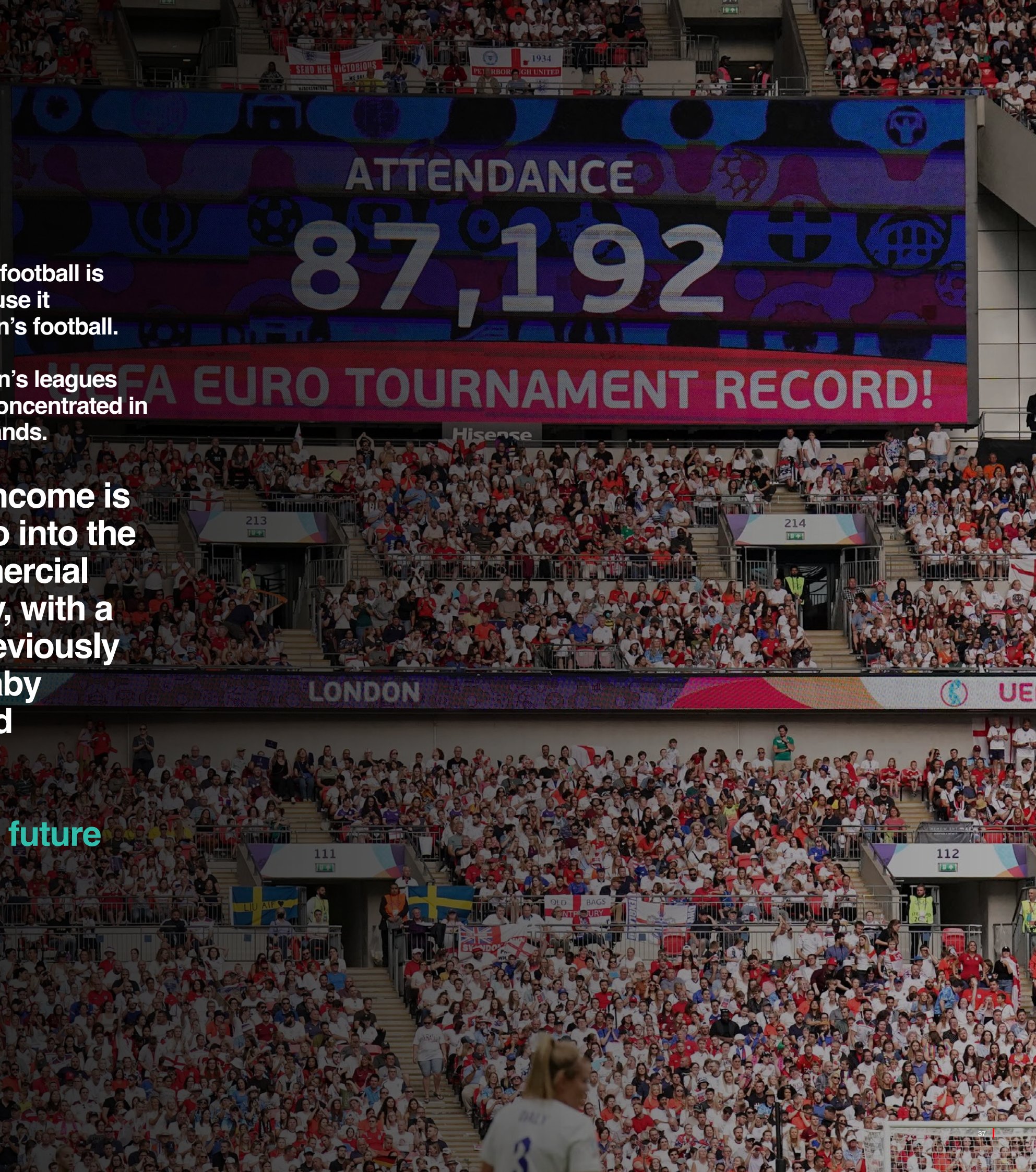
We have seen dramatic increases in revenue in women's leagues and clubs over the last few years, though this is still concentrated in less risky markets and more globally recognisable brands.

While broadcasting and match day income is increasing as interest and funding go into the development of the game, it is commercial partnerships that are leading the way, with a large number of brands that have previously avoided football (from make-up to baby products) pushing into the space and changing perceptions along the way.

This can only be a good thing for the future of the sport.



CHRISTINA PHILIPPOU
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ACCOUNTING AND SPORT FINANCE
UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH, UK





THE FOUR KEY
FACTORS SHAPING THE
FUTURE
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:

FANS



MEDIA

PLAYERS



BRANDS



FOOTBALL WITHOUT FANS IS NOTHING

JOCK STEIN, SCOTTISH FOOTBALL MANAGER

THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

FANS

These words were first made famous by Scottish football manager Jock Stein who wanted to stress the importance of having fans coming through the turnstiles and watching matches in the stadium.

Today, the quote is not only used to highlight the role of fans at games, but also frequently shared to call attention to the significance that fans have on the commercial fortunes of the game.

Throughout the history of professional football, there have been three main sources of commercial revenue which have helped it grow into the most popular sport in the world: matchday, broadcast and commercial.

Fans are the pivotal point of all three of these revenue streams, where they directly contribute to matchday income through buying tickets and merchandise from rightsholders and indirectly contribute through paying broadcasting fees and

acting as the key target audience for sponsoring brands who finance the sport through commercial income.

By acting as a central cog in all three revenue streams, fans will always play a crucial role in the commercial landscape of women's football, where their characteristics, values and behaviours will shape their actions within the industry.

Therefore, to fully understand the commercial landscape of women's football, it is vital to first understand the fans of women's football.

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN’S FOOTBALL FANS:

WHO THEY ARE

THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE
OF WOMEN’S FOOTBALL

FANS

SPORTFIVE’s Women’s Football Fan Survey³⁹ has found that there are 196.2 million people aged 16-64 who are interested in women’s football across the six markets studied in this whitepaper: Australia, France, Germany, Spain, the UK and the USA.

This represents an average of more than half (54%) of the 16-64 population of these six countries who are interested in women’s football - showing that there is real wide-spread appetite for the sport that goes beyond singular events such as major international tournaments.

Looking more closely at these fans and analysing who they are, our research shows that roughly two thirds (64%) of women’s football fans in the surveyed markets are aged between 16-44, strengthening the the argument that the sport is appealing to a younger audience.

Here, people aged 16-34 account for a disproportionately higher share of women’s football interest compared to their representation in the general population, further suggesting that women’s football is resonating with generations that may value greater diversity and inclusivity in sports.

This is underpinned by women’s football’s more equal gender split which sees 47.5% female fans, compared to 42.4% female fans of men’s football - once again disproving the common misconception that most women’s football fans are women and proving that the sport has a more balanced and inclusive environment.

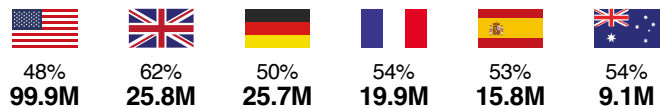
As well as appealing to a young and diverse audience, women’s football fans are also more likely to be in a relationship, with 62% either married or with a partner, whilst 46% have at least one child.

196M

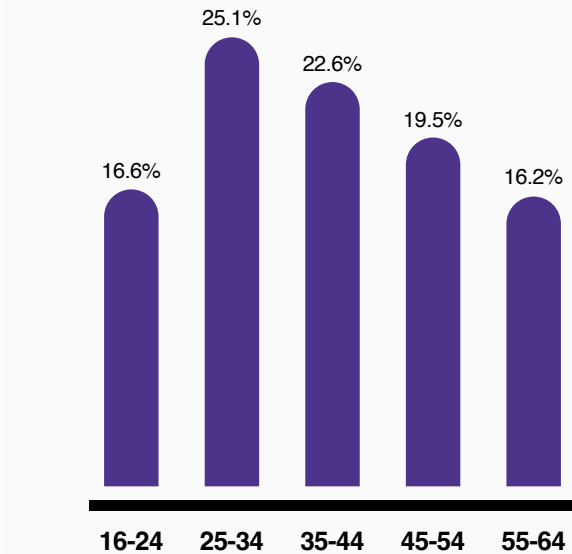
PEOPLE AGED 16-64 INTERESTED IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL ACROSS AUSTRALIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, SPAIN, UK AND U.S.



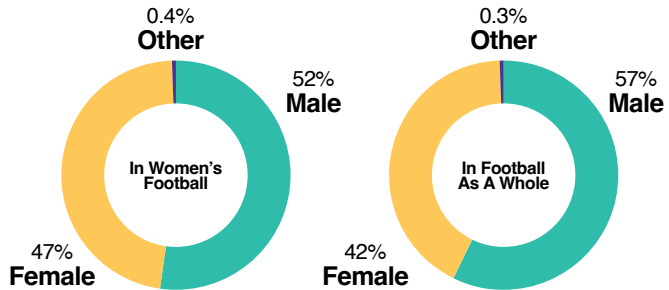
PROPORTION OF POPULATION INTERESTED
IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL:
Respondents who answered ‘Very interested’ or ‘Somewhat interested’



AVERAGE AGE DISTRIBUTION OF PEOPLE
WITH INTEREST IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL:



AVERAGE GENDER OF PEOPLE INTERESTED:



62%
OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL
ARE MARRIED OR IN A RELATIONSHIP

46%
OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL
HAVE AT LEAST ONE CHILD AGED 14 OR UNDER

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN’S FOOTBALL FANS:

WHY
THEY FOLLOW

THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE
OF WOMEN’S FOOTBALL
FANS

When analysing the grounds behind their fandom, our research has found that the most common reason behind fans starting to follow women’s football is based on an interest derived from a specific national football team.

This is of particular note as sports fandom is often thought to be born through associations with family and friends, and whilst both of these are key factors behind why fans started to follow the sport, the particular importance of national teams in women’s football showcases a difference in how women’s football fans form fandom compared to other sports.

Here, the sport’s unique past clearly plays a key role, as national teams and major tournaments, such as the 1999 FIFA Women’s World Cup in the USA, have functioned as one of the key drivers in revitalising the sport following decades of enforced obscurity.

Many fans still feel that women’s football’s past is affecting the game today, where 76% of fans feel that they don’t see enough coverage of women’s football and 81% would like to see specific content formats produced for women’s football.



54%
OF WOMEN’S FOOTBALL FANS SUPPORT
THE SAME WOMEN’S AND MEN’S TEAM

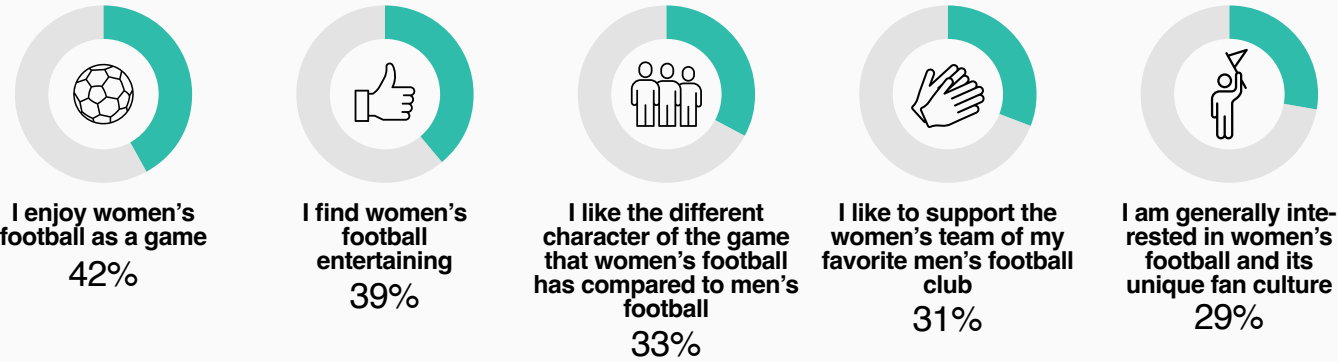
VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN’S FOOTBALL:
Respondents from general population who answered ‘Fully agree’
or ‘Somewhat agree’

- 84% TEAM SPIRIT AND COOPERATION
- 82% COMMITMENT AND AMBITION
- 81% FAIR PLAY AND RESPECT TOWARDS OPPONENTS AND REFS
- 81% FIGHTING SPIRIT AND COMMITMENT
- 81% AUTHENTICITY AND HONESTY
- 80% INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

TOP REASONS BEHIND STARTING TO FOLLOW WOMEN’S FOOTBALL



TOP REASONS BEHIND CONTINUED INTEREST IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL



UNDERSTANDING WOMEN’S FOOTBALL FANS:

WHAT

THEY LIKE

THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE
OF WOMEN’S FOOTBALL
FANS



Zooming in on women’s football fans’ interests and characteristics outside of football, we can see that health and well-being plays an important role in fans’ lives and outlook, where health (86%), healthy food (83%) and wellness (80%) were all listed as key interests for the group. Music (85%), travelling (82%), skin care (75%) and furnishing & homeware (73%) were also popular areas of interest amongst women’s football fans.

In comparison to the general population, fans of women’s football have a number of outstanding interests, including sports (31% more interested), cryptocurrency (26%), insurance (30%) and most notably, E-mobility, where they are on average 34% more interested than the general population.

This particular intrigue with electric vehicles gives brands an insight into and how to best engage with the fan group, as our research has found it reflects a key value for them, with 40% of fans expecting women’s football sponsors to be sustainable.

If brands can tap into this, they can expect a favourable brand perception amongst women’s football fans, with 62% of fans perceiving sponsors of women’s football to be more likeable.

IN CONTRAST TO THE GENERAL POPULATION,
PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL
ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE INTERESTED IN:
Respondents who answered ‘Very interested’ or ‘Rather interested’

34% MORE INTERESTED IN
E-MOBILITY / ELECTRIC VEHICLES

33% MORE INTERESTED IN
CRYPTO

30% MORE INTERESTED IN
INSURANCE

27% MORE INTERESTED IN
SPORTS

WOMEN’S FOOTBALL FANS TOP INTERESTS:
Respondents who answered ‘Very interested’ or ‘Rather interested’



Health
86%



Music
85%



Healthy food
83%



Travelling
82%



Sports
82%



Smartphones
& tablets
81%



Wellness
80%



Skin care
75%



Furnishing &
homeware
73%



Home &
improvement / DIY
71%

62%

OF FANS PERCEIVE SPONSORS OF WOMEN’S
FOOTBALL TO BE MORE LIKEABLE

75%

OF FANS HAVE AN INTEREST IN
SUSTAINABILITY

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN’S FOOTBALL FANS:

HOW THEY CONSUME

THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE
OF WOMEN’S FOOTBALL

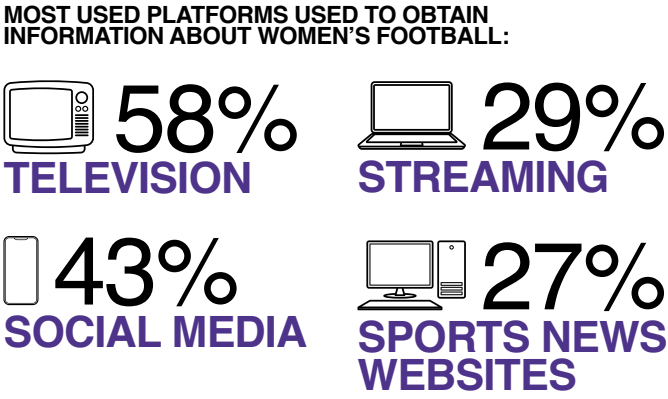
FANS

To activate these sponsorships and engage these audiences most effectively, brands need to ensure they are in the right spaces.

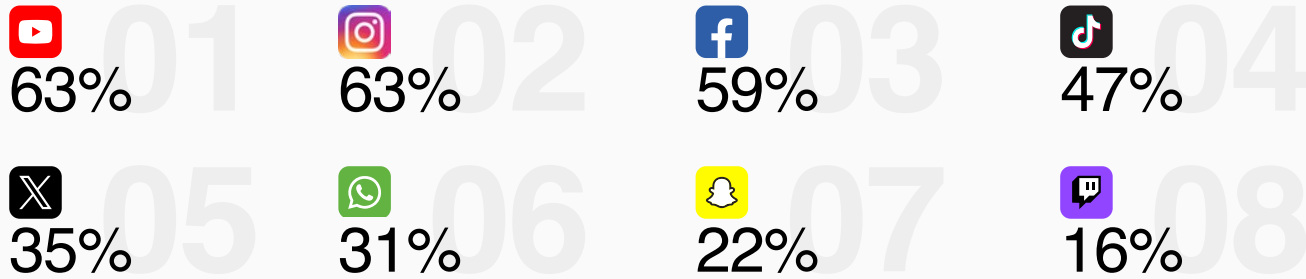
The two most prominent channels for women’s football fans to obtain information about the sport are TV and social media, with streaming platforms and sports news websites acting as supplementary channels.

Across social media channels, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook lead the way in terms of usage with TikTok growing in influence, particularly amongst younger audiences. X, WhatsApp, Snapchat and Twitch also stand as additional platforms for fans to obtain information on women’s football.

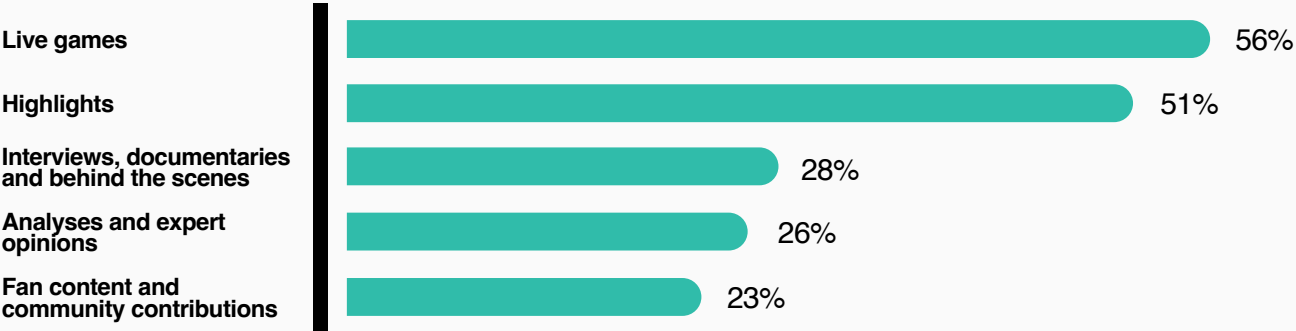
If brands utilise these platforms and adapt their messaging, they can expect results. 79% of fans are involved in the decision making process when their company purchases a new product or service, 10% more than the national average, making them a key audience for sponsoring brands.

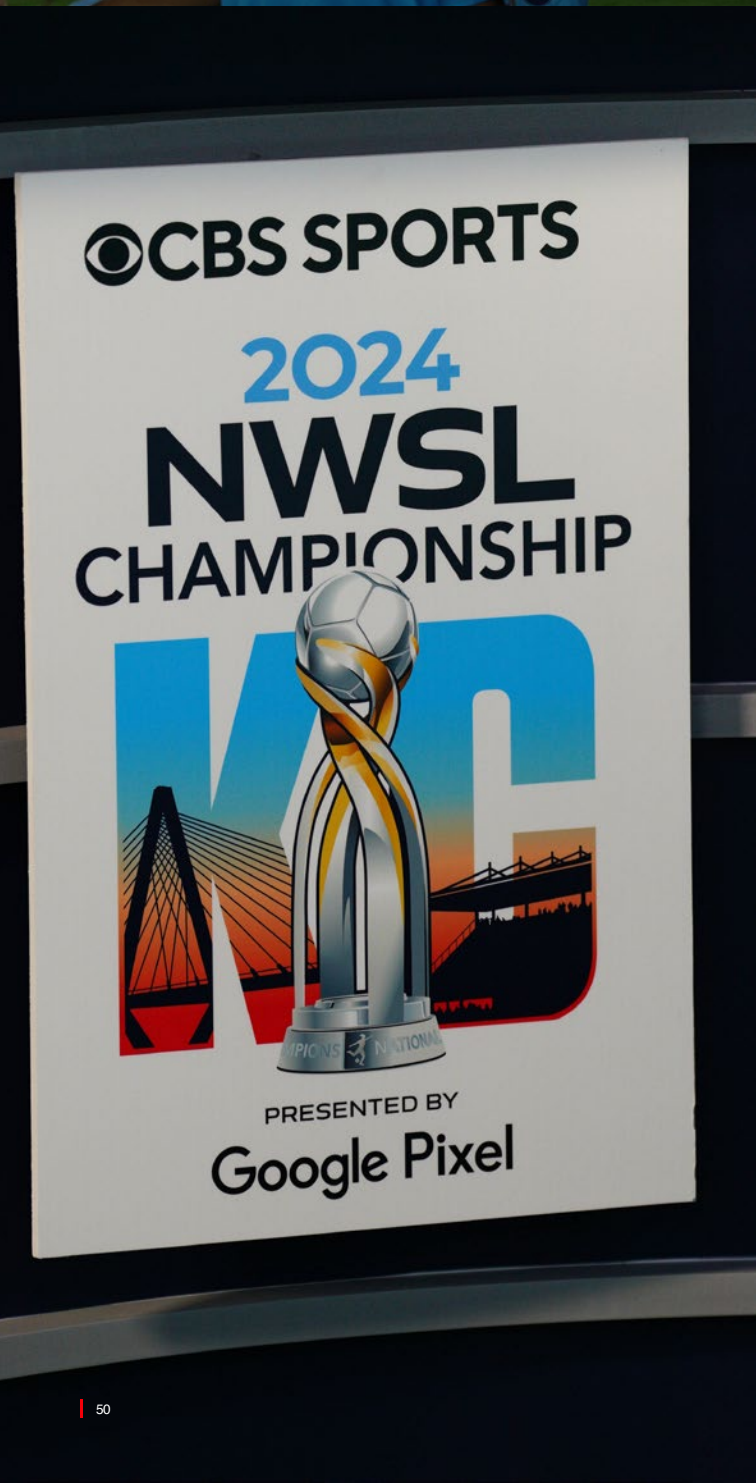


MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN’S FOOTBALL:



FAVOURITE TYPES OF CONTENT RELATED TO WOMEN’S FOOTBALL





THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

I MEDIA

The three income streams of matchday, broadcast and commercial that account for the overall revenue for women's football are not unique to the women's game. These three sources make up the overall revenue generation in both men's and women's football, but to different extents.

Commercial revenue accounts for by far the largest proportion of revenue growth for clubs and leagues in women's football, followed by matchday and broadcast¹³.

The role of media and broadcasting services is however notably more apparent for the commercial landscape of men's football, where it generates the largest percentage of revenue for teams from the the top five leagues in Europe, followed closely by commercial income².

The disproportionate role of media revenue in women's football compared to the men's game (see figure 2 on the following page) is one of the most noteworthy aspects of the commercial landscape of women's football.

The reasons behind this imbalance have been studied for decades, with most researchers attributing

the source of disparity to the historical suppression of women's sports³².

This has severely slowed down the professionalisation of women's football, and as a consequence its media ecosystem, leaving the game with several key challenges to address.

These include delivering a telegenic viewing experience with increased production quality, providing star power, both through recognisable brands and players as well as achieving consistency and accessibility through dedicated 'go-to' platforms to consume women's football.

When assessing how the global women's football media landscape has coped with these challenges so far, there is a clear distinction between the three categories that make up the media environment: domestic national team coverage, domestic league coverage and international media distribution.

Whilst all three sectors require commercial investment to fully overcome all of the challenges that are facing the industry, there have already been notable successes that point to a way forward.

The Barclay's Women's Super League (WSL) has gone some way to addressing the challenges through revolutionising their rights packaging with a mix of free-to-air, pay and digital coverage, as well as leveraging star power through an athlete focused strategy.

Other domestic leagues such as the U.S.' National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) have addressed the lack of women's specific content by investing beyond licence fees and creating fan-first productions together with their media partners Amazon Prime, CBS, ESPN and Scripps.

Whilst the WSL and NWSL have taken vital steps to increase the media value of their properties, domestic leagues across the globe are still working to grow audience levels on a consistent basis.

76%

OF FANS FEEL THAT THEY DON'T SEE ENOUGH COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

81%

WOULD LIKE TO SEE SPECIFIC CONTENT FORMATS PRODUCED FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

The challenge of delivering consistent audience levels has been met with a clear solution at national team level. Strong financial contributions to the public media sector, such as UEFA's partnership with the European Broadcasting Union⁶⁰, has seen an increase in free-to-air domestic coverage of the women's national teams in the six markets studied in this report.

As a result, live audiences have consistently increased and have had a telling impact on growing fandom in the game. Findings from SPORTFIVE's Women's Football Fan Survey 2025 show that the most prevalent reason behind becoming a women's football fan across the six markets was because of their interest in the national team³⁹.

Our research has also found that there is a generally strong and growing fandom in women's football across all six markets, with over half (53%) of the populations stating that they are interested in the sport.

Whilst these fans can access domestic national team coverage, fans looking to engage with domestic leagues via traditional broadcasting platforms are faced with an extremely fragmented media landscape, where they are tasked with subscribing to a multitude of platforms to access games, creating further barriers to entry when trying to consume content.

Therefore, it's clear to see that the optimal women's football media distribution method, which can balance revenue with eyeballs, is still yet to be defined. A problem which, if solved, would only lead to blossoming revenue for both women's football and its media partners.

In the 'What next for women's football' section, we explore the way forward for the sport and its media landscape as we look at the potential solutions to solving the broadcasting riddle.



MEDIA

WOMEN'S VS MEN'S REVENUE STREAM PERCENTAGES

DATA BASED ON HIGHEST REVENUE GENERATING CLUBS⁵⁹

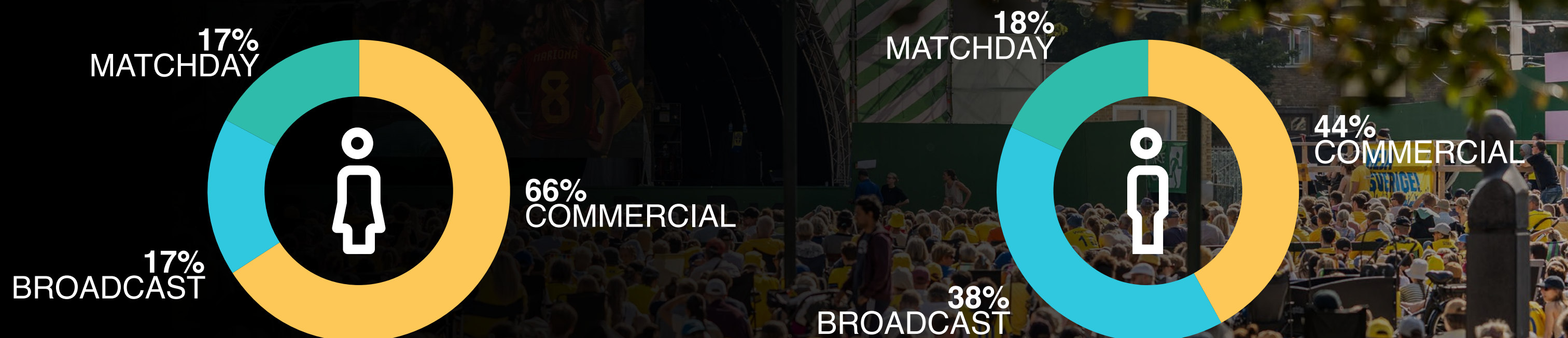


FIGURE 2



THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

PLAYERS

There are arguably few sports in the world where the role of individual athletes has had a greater impact than in women's football. Having first campaigned to bring the sport out of the shadows in the 1970s, players are to this day combining their roles as athletes with a greater purpose of fighting for a more equal and inclusive game.

Recent years have seen a number of notable protests and calls-for-change from players, including the U.S. women's national team's gender discrimination lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation, 15 Spanish national team players asking not to be called up for duty amidst institutional issues and the England squad writing a letter to government officials, asking for "every young girl in the nation to be able to play football at school."

This comes at a time where a shift in cultural and social values and attitudes towards gender roles and stereotypes is occurring. As a result, women's football is seeing increased visibility and fandom on a global stage, with audiences growing and attendances rising, and at the heart of this reform is the players.

One of the biggest factors behind the increased importance of individual players is that through social media, they have their own platform to influence and drive change. Many women's footballers are amassing large followings, with some seeing greater audiences than the clubs they represent and the leagues they play in (see Figures 3-8 on the following page).

Through the research, SPORTFIVE have identified that 57% of female football fans regularly (at least once a week) rely on social media as a key platform when following women's football. This fanbase also drives twice the engagement on social media³⁹. Whilst male footballers have higher followings, female players have a more engaged fanbase and interactive community of followers engaging in content via likes, shares and comments.

The rising influence of athletes in society is a trend which resurfaces throughout the wider sports industry and is reflected in the marketability of female athletes, with SportsPro's recent study finding that 52% of the top 25 most marketable athletes in the world are women⁴⁰.

Research has shown that both Millennials and Generation Z are more likely to follow individual athletes on social media than they are to watch live sport⁵⁴, with 80% of Generation Z following a professional athlete on social media⁷.

THESE GENERATIONAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOURS HAVE TURNED PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES INTO MARKETING PLATFORMS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT.

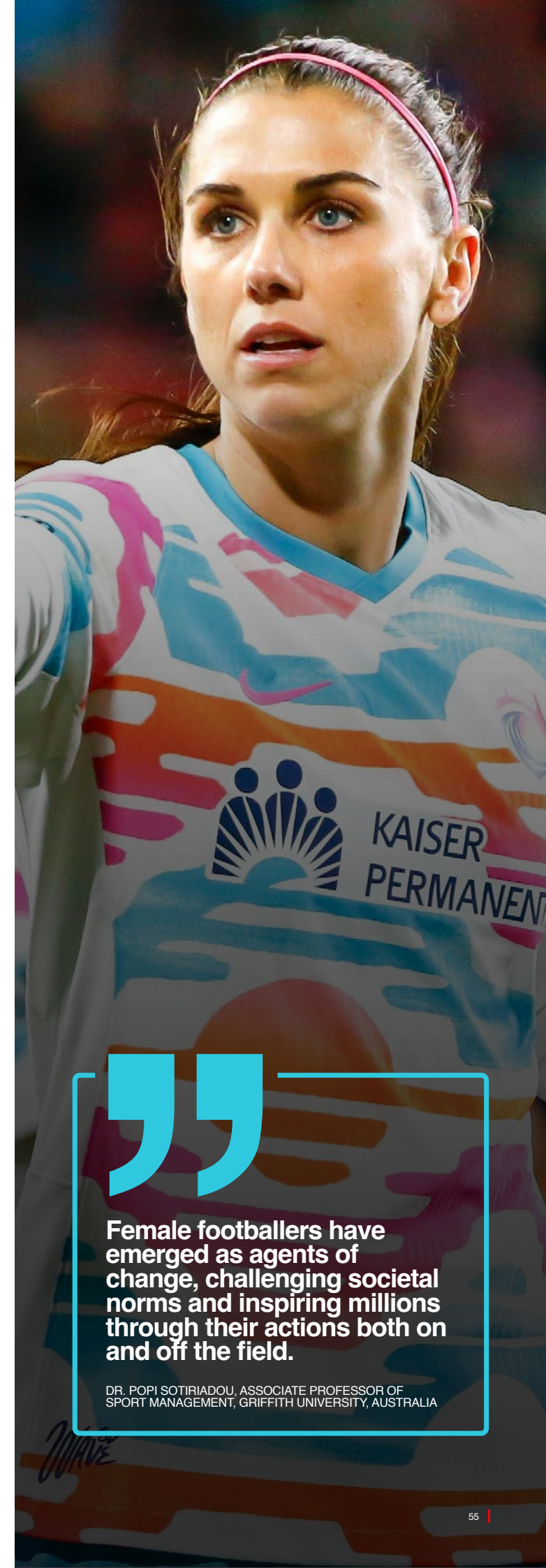
And nowhere is this more telling than in women's football. Social media's particularly prominent place in the fan community, coupled with the players' trailblazing role as advocates for equality in society, has caught the attention of some of the world's biggest brands.

From working with brands on community projects and grassroots fundraising to fronting marketing campaigns, the role that individual players have played in developing the game, building awareness and driving commercial revenue cannot be underestimated.

”

Female footballers have emerged as agents of change, challenging societal norms and inspiring millions through their actions both on and off the field.

DR. POPI SOTIRIADOU, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF
SPORT MANAGEMENT, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA



”

Women's football has proven to be a powerful tool for addressing social issues such as gender equality, community building and female empowerment.

The sport's ability to unite diverse communities and promote social cohesion makes it an invaluable asset in driving

positive societal change.

ASISAT OSHOALA
NIGERIA AND BAY FC FORWARD

PLAYERS

TEAMS, LEAGUES AND PLAYERS WITH MOST **INSTAGRAM** **FOLLOWERS** FOR THE SIX CHOSEN MARKETS

CORRECT AS OF 17/01/2025

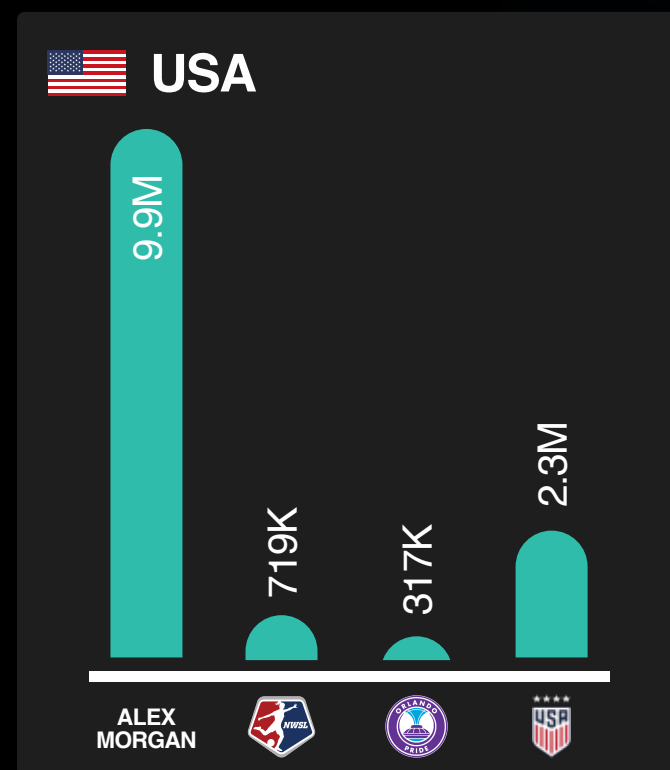


FIGURE 3

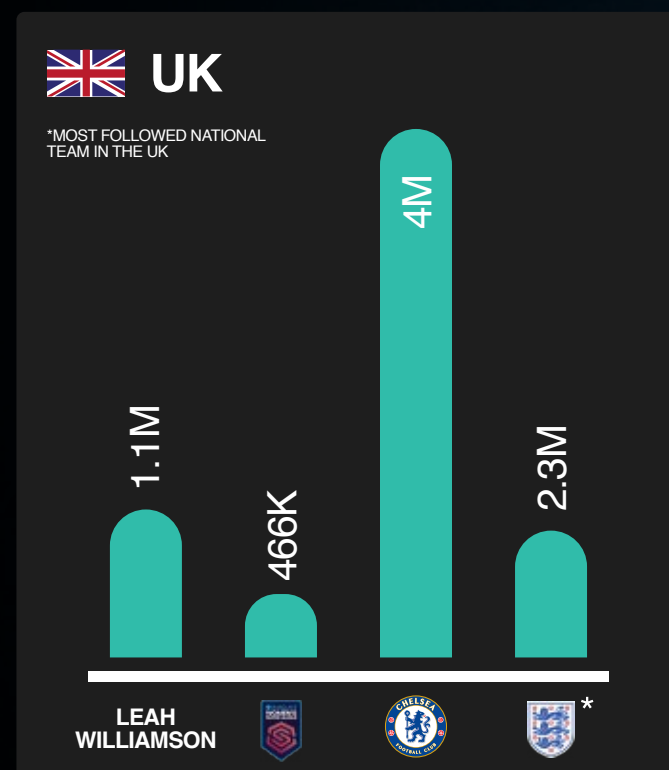


FIGURE 4

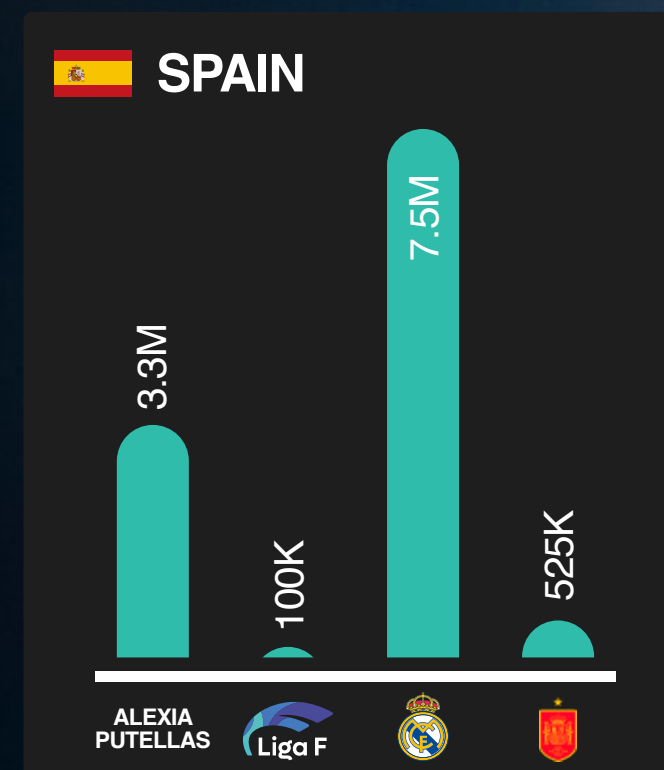


FIGURE 5

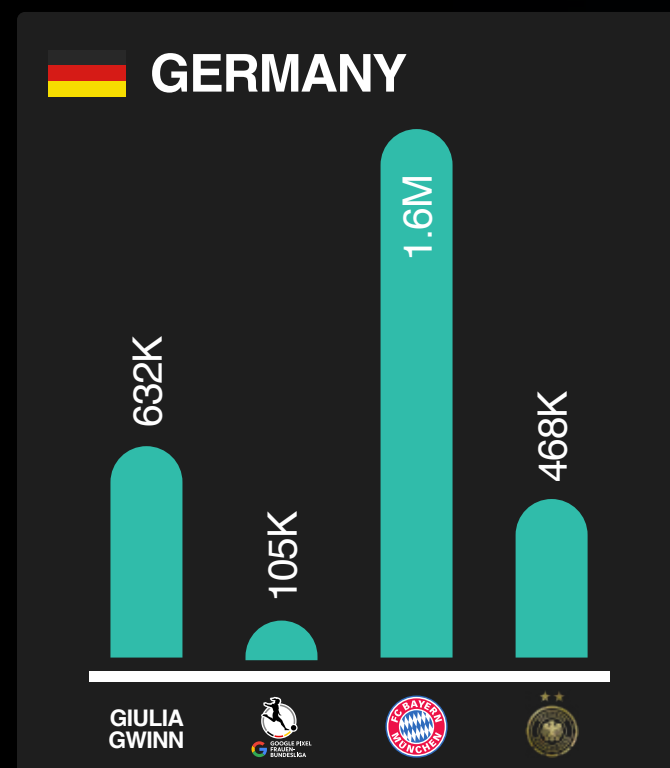


FIGURE 6

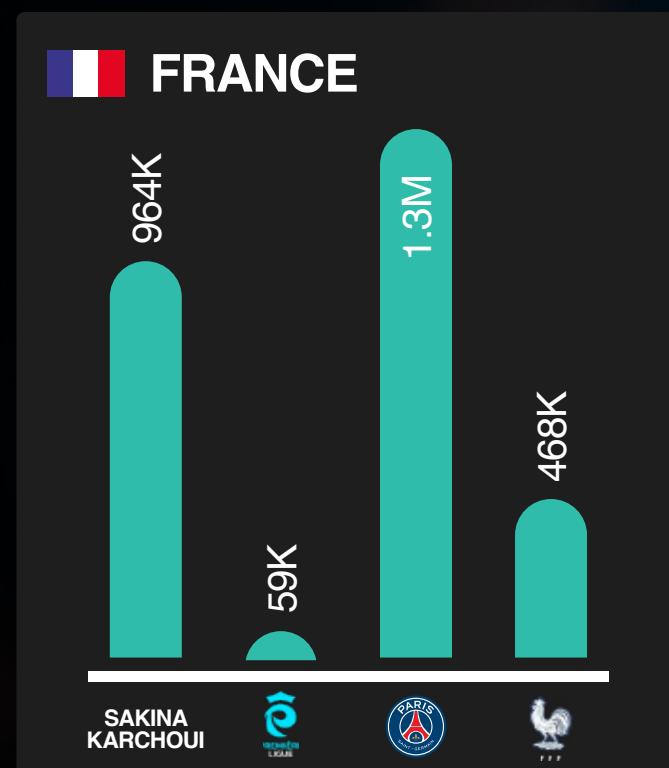


FIGURE 7

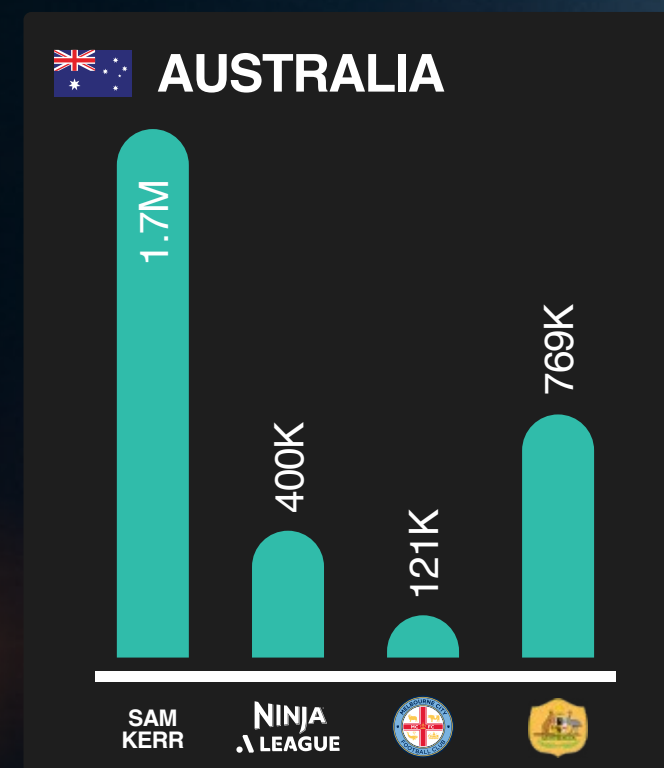
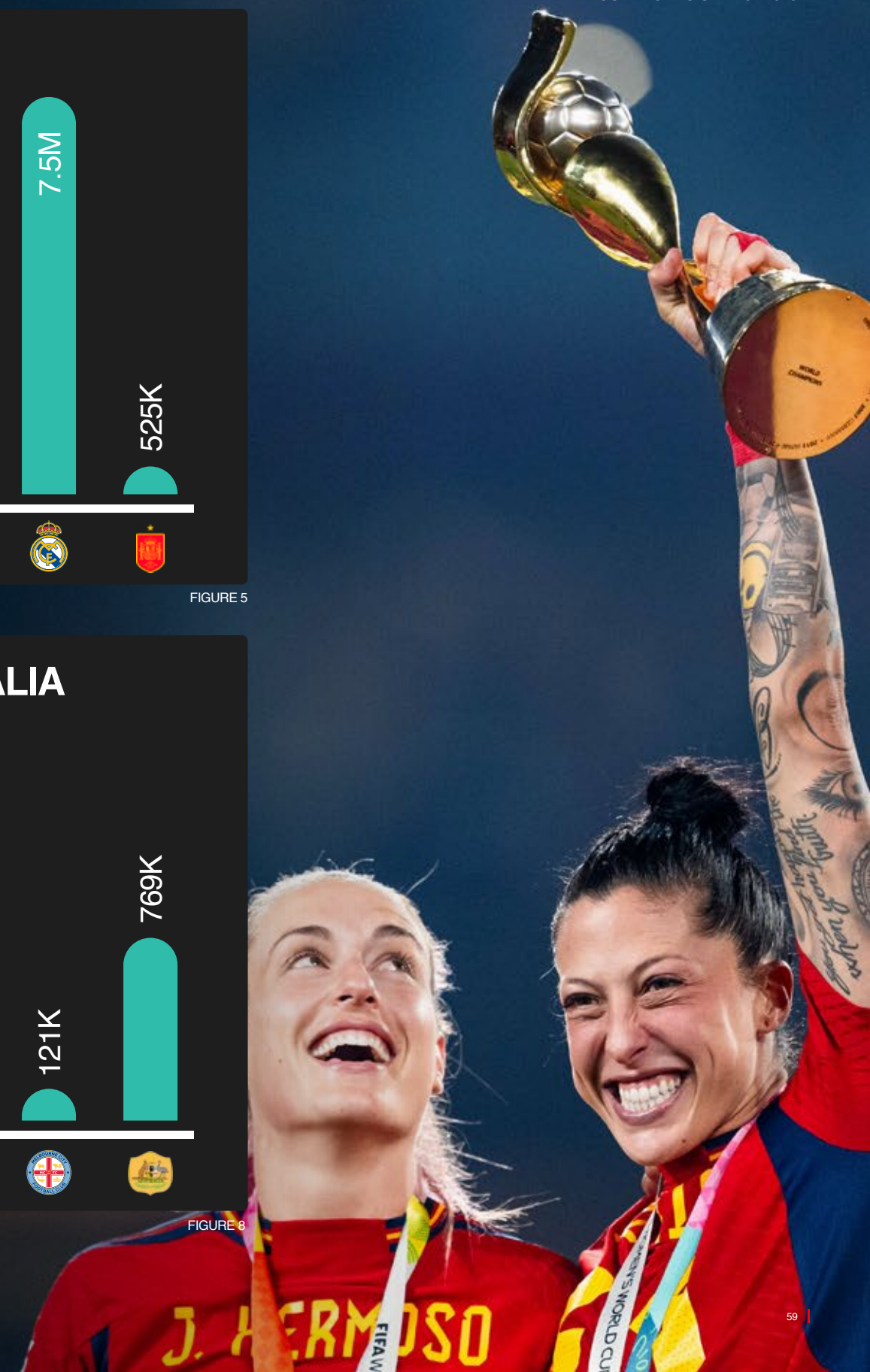


FIGURE 8





THE COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

BRANDS

Businesses, organisations and brands have shaped professional sport since its inception³⁵, most commonly by supplying rights holders with financial contributions in return for enhanced brand image, exposure, marketing rights and community engagement.

These financial contributions, often referred to as commercial income, are one of the three key revenue streams for rightsholders in the sporting industry.

As mentioned in the 'Media' section above, commercial revenue plays a particularly important role in women's football where research from football's world governing body, FIFA, has found that the vast majority of women's football club's income is generated from commercial revenue - greatly overshadowing the two subsequent revenue streams; matchday and media¹⁶.

The importance of the commercial revenue stream in women's football is further underpinned by the role that it plays for the clubs leading the way in the sport. Deloitte's analysis of the women's football clubs with the highest revenue found that 66% of the clubs' revenue was generated through commercial partnerships, 17% by matchday and 17% by broadcasting⁵⁹.

This outstanding significance of commercial income is driven by two main factors: bundling and unbundling. The term bundling is used to describe the practice of selling commercial rights (such as sponsorships and partnerships) to brands as part of a package deal with the men's team or competition.

Bundling first became common practice in women's football in the 1980s and 1990s, as the sport started to rebuild following the ban which had hindered its progress for the majority of the 20th century.

During this time, many domestic women's teams were formed as part of a football club centred around the already existing men's teams, with a percentage of the revenues generated from commercial deals being attributed to the women's team.

The recent global surge in interest in women's football, sparked by major international tournaments such as the FIFA Women's World Cup, has challenged this status quo.



What makes women's football particularly attractive to brands is the unique environment that it offers. With a clear distinction from the men's game, women's football is often perceived as more family-friendly, fair, authentic and honest.

JESSICA STOMMEL - SALES DIRECTOR AND WOMEN'S
SPORT LEAD GERMANY, SPORTFIVE

The rapid rise in interest coupled with women's football's unique fanbase, has helped many brands to identify a gap in the commercial evaluation of rights within the women's game, allowing for lower entry costs and higher returns on investment.

Consequently, brands are now actively seeking out partnerships that have both strong men's and women's teams - leading to women's football rightsholders seeing greater percentages of the bundled commercial deals.

At the top end of the pyramid, the interest from brands has had a particularly strong impact, where rightsholders have chosen to unbundle many of their women's rights or adopt a hybrid approach in response to increased brand interest and investment.

This is evidenced in 10 of the 15 highest earning women's football teams in the world adopting a hybrid approach to their commercial partnerships, unbundling a selection of rights, whilst keeping a number of key partners across both the men's and women's teams.

This unbundling practice follows in the footsteps of governing bodies such as FIFA and UEFA. The latter of which first unbundled their rights to their women's football properties in 2018 when Visa became the first UEFA sponsor dedicated to women's football⁵⁰. Brands from a range of industries including Amazon, Hublot, Euronics and Grifols have since joined the financial services company in focusing on UEFA's women's properties.

Ahead of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, FIFA also adopted an unbundled approach choosing to sell both their broadcasting and commercial rights separately to the men's edition. This decision led to a 53% increase in total revenue compared to the previous tournament in 2019⁵, including more than \$308 million in net revenue from sponsoring brands³¹.

Whilst the vast majority of women's football rights are still bundled with the men's game, the rise in rate and value of unbundled partnerships, in addition to major governing bodies choosing to move towards an unbundled or hybrid approach shows a significant shift in how brands are viewing women's football.

This shift can be seen as one of, if not, the biggest driving force behind the growth of women's football that has occurred in the past 10 years.

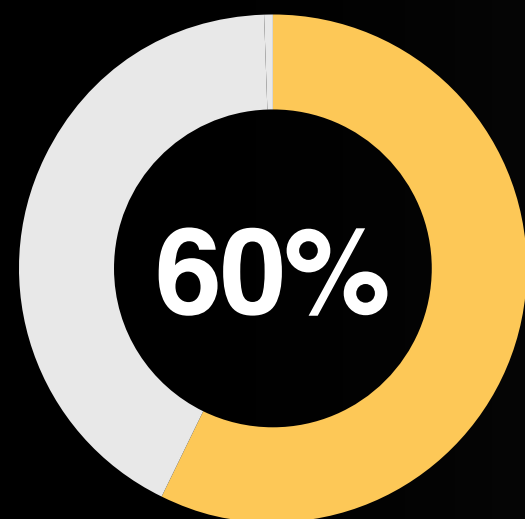


Brands should note that investing in women's football means approaching the sport with a different perspective. It's much more than just a game; it's a catalyst for social change, a symbol of progress, and if done right it can position the brand alongside the sport's values.

VIRGINIE ADNET, SPONSORSHIP DIRECTOR,
OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS

BRANDS

BUNDLED AND UNBUNDLED SPONSORSHIPS



OF THE HIGHEST EARNING
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAMS
EMPLOY A HYBRID
APPROACH TO BUNDLING

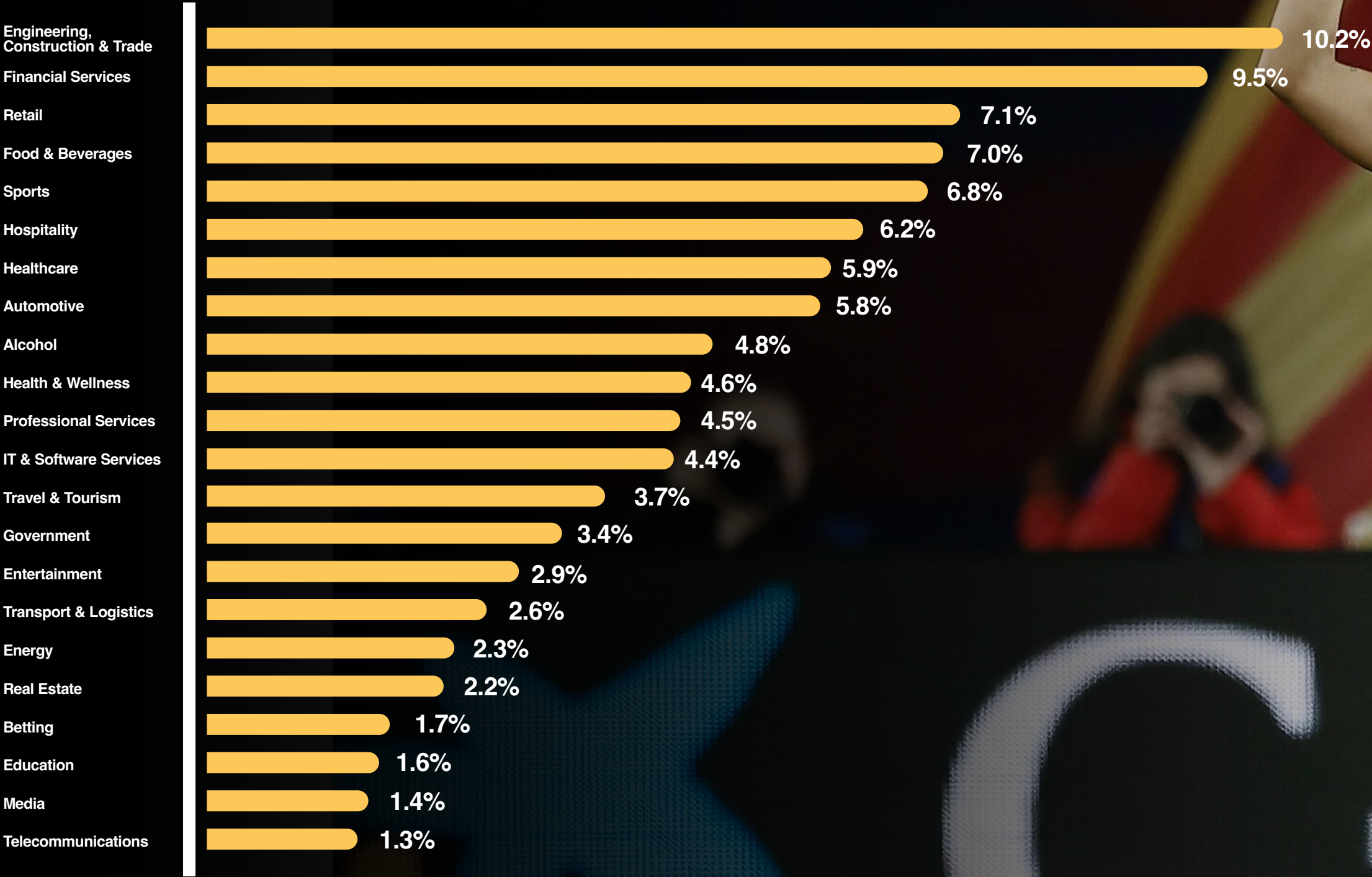
FOR EVERY \$1 DOLLAR SPENT BY A
CORPORATE SPONSOR IN WOMEN'S SPORTS,
MORE THAN \$7
IS GENERATED IN CUSTOMER VALUE FOR
THAT ORGANISATION*

*According to data from Change Our Game's, "The value of you can be what you can see" report.

BRANDS

INDUSTRIES WITH MOST SPONSORSHIPS IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Data from top flight leagues in Australia, France, Germany, Spain, UK and USA from 2024/25 season



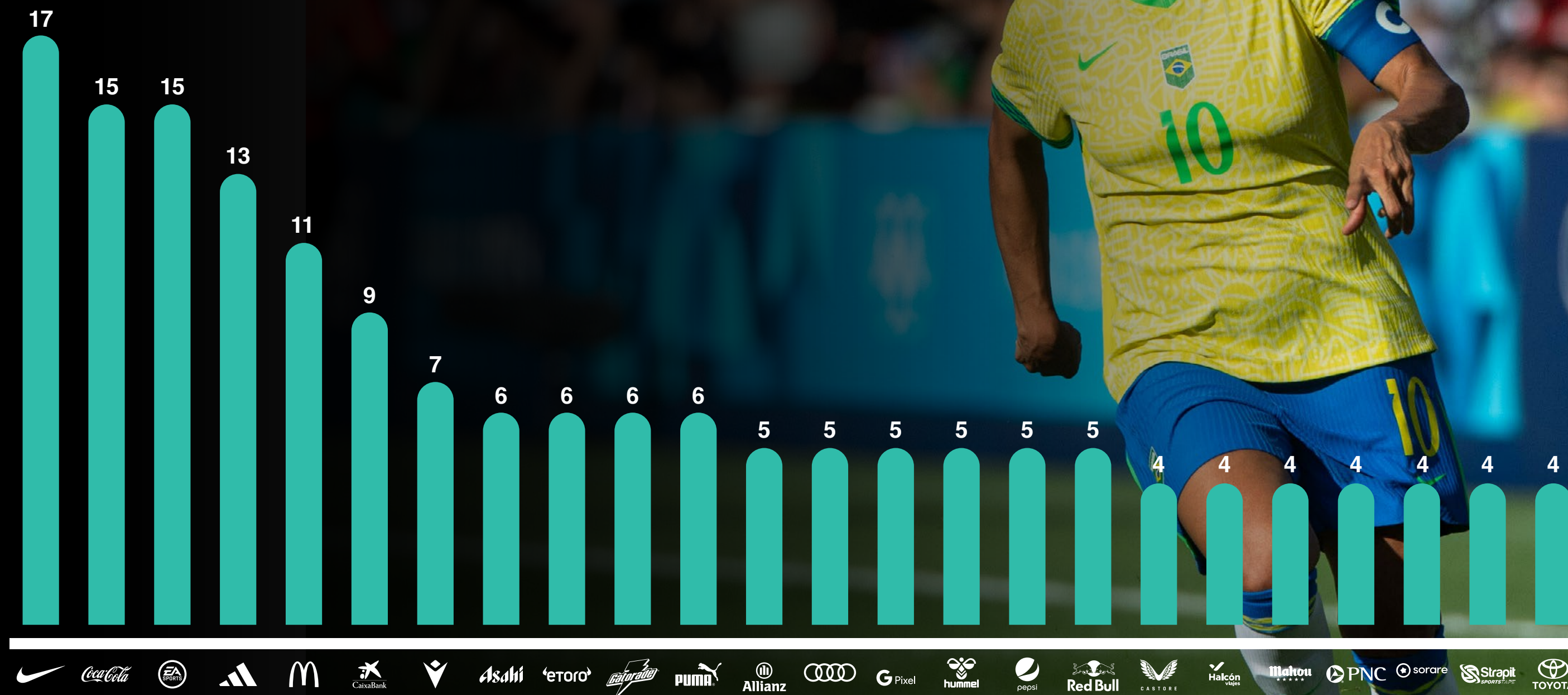
Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Brand Sponsorship Research 2025



BRANDS

THE MOST PREVALENT BRANDS IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Data from top flight leagues in Australia, France, Germany, Spain, UK and USA from 2024/25 season



Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Brand Sponsorship Research 2025

[illegible]

The sponsorship landscape in women's football is still taking shape. Sponsors have historically been local market-decisions and smaller domestic budgets, or come about as a result of bundles with the men's team (with a positive shift in where they sit in the order of priority), but as the sport has drastically grown over the last 10 years, we are seeing more and more major global brands create dedicated strategies for the space.

As women's football continues to develop, we can expect to see a more settled sponsorship landscape with clear patterns in the brands and industries investing in the space. This means that brands now have a limited window of opportunity to invest, create compelling activations and position themselves as early adopters in the market.

TOM PROSSER, VICE PRESIDENT PARTNERSHIP SALES, SPORTEIVE



Women's football has yet to achieve true product-market fit—every organization in this space must focus its efforts on solving this, as it holds the key to unlocking the sport's immense potential.

At Mercury/13, we believe the future fans of this game are the women who sit at the periphery of sport, eager to engage. The real challenge — and opportunity — is to know them, understand them, connect with them, and ultimately serve them.

In the meantime, sponsorship will remain the economic engine driving women's football forward,

paving the way for financial independence and long-term profitability providing a unique opportunity for brands. And to be honest, I truly cannot think of anything more culturally relevant or impactful space to invest in.

VICTOIRE COGEVINA REYNAL
CO-FOUNDER & CO-CEO MERCURY/13

06

SPONSORSHIP AS A DRIVER FOR GROWTH

The importance of the commercial side of the women's game cannot be understated. FIFA's Women's football: member associations survey report 2023¹ found that the biggest catalyst for the growth in women's football in recent years has been commercial revenue, and in particular: sponsorships.

The value of sponsorships should not come as a surprise. In 2023, Statista reported that the global sports sponsorship market was worth over \$105 billion and is expected to reach almost \$190 billion by 2030⁴².

What is noteworthy however is the extent of sponsorships' impact on the women's football industry and its revenue. With such a large proportion of the industry's revenue being generated from commercial deals it highlights the value that brands place on women's football.

This is a theme which can be seen across women's sport as a whole. Global sports data provider, Sponsor United's report found that the number of sponsorships in women's professional sports has increased by more than 22% from 2023 to 2024³⁸.

SPORTFIVE attribute the increase in sponsorships in women's football and women's sport to brands

understanding the rapidly growing interest in the game, the younger, gender balanced and unique audience it attracts, as well as wanting to associate their brand with messages and values closely linked with women's football, such as equality, resilience and female strength.

In addition, brands that have invested in the game have proved that they are willing and able to adapt their sponsorship models to fit women's football's unique qualities, whereas many rightsholders and media platforms are still trying to find the right path forward in this rapidly growing industry.

Through our work with the world's leading teams, athletes, leagues and competitions, SPORTFIVE have analysed the successes from the revenue stream which is currently dominating women's football.

In this section, we explore the lessons from the three most common forms of sponsorship within the women's game and the impact they are having on both brands and rightsholders.

66%

OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
CLUBS REVENUE IS MADE
UP OF COMMERCIAL INCOME



SPONSORSHIP AS A DRIVER FOR GROWTH

TEAM & CLUB SPONSORSHIPS

Individual football clubs and teams have long been one of the most coveted sponsorship assets in sport due to the unique level of loyalty and passion that fans feel for their team.

By choosing to partner with a specific team, brands are able to access and harness this loyalty to deliver high levels of engagement and reach. This is typically brought to life through a number of different brand activations with the club (See Figure 9 beside).

In men's football, these activations are usually centred around maximising the vast reach of live matches through perimeter advertising and shirt sponsorships. Brands in the women's game have on the other hand developed a different approach to team and club sponsorships.

SPORTFIVE have found that these brands typically favour in-stadium/fan activations, social media campaigns and player access when activating their team sponsorships.

These differences can be put down to a number of factors, including fan consumption habits, which see many women's football fans engage via social media rather than live matches⁵⁴, fan personas, that value in-person engagement³⁹ and player perceptions, with many female athletes being seen as more 'inspiring' and 'progressive' than male athletes³⁰.

Research has also shown that although fans of women's football are loyal and passionate, their interest isn't always purely based around one team or club (as is often the case with men's football). Instead women's football fans' interest is more broad, mainstream and less controversial.¹⁸

Whilst sponsoring brands in men's football frequently use tribalism to their advantage, brands in the women's game tend to use this lack of tribalism to reach a wider and more broadly interested audience, whilst still capitalising on a loyal core fan base.

These differences are already causing both brands and rightsholders to reevaluate how they categorise and value their sponsorships in the women's game, with some rightsholders creating standalone sponsorship rights for women's teams - rights that were historically bundled together with the men's team.

BRAND RIGHTS & ACTIVATIONS FOR TEAM SPONSORSHIPS

Shirt Sponsorships

Perimeter Advertising

Social Media Activations & Campaigns

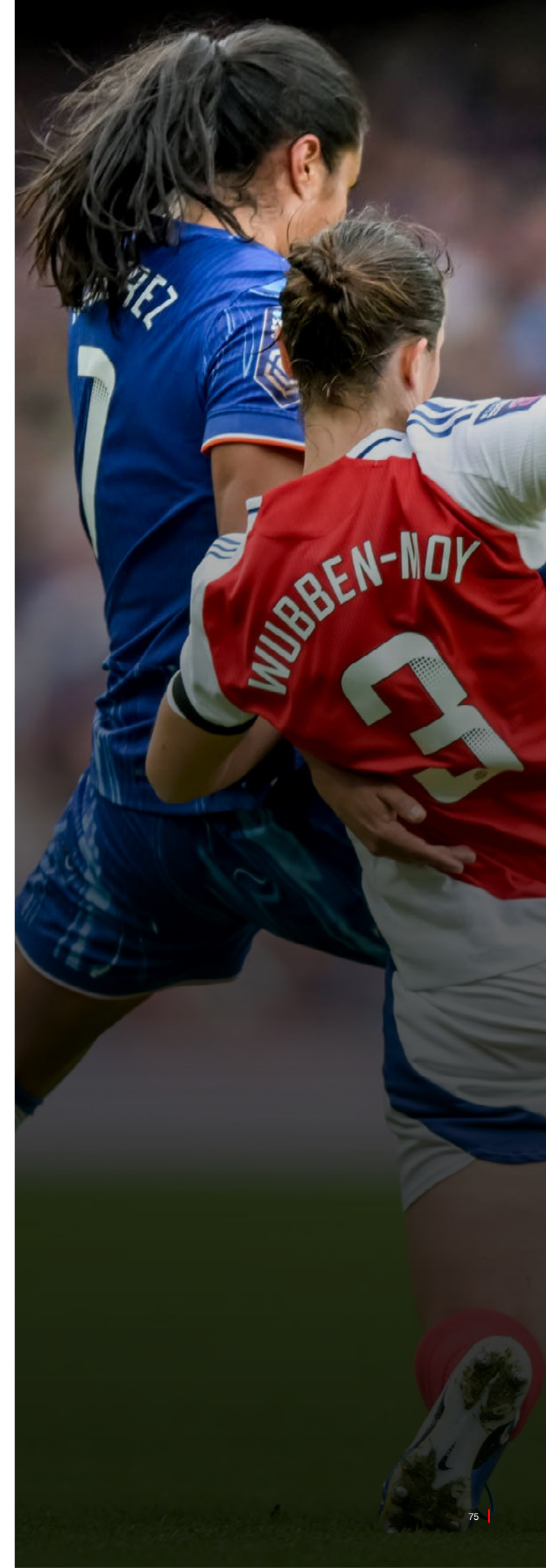
Hospitality

Community Projects

Player Appearances

In-stadium / Fan Activations

FIGURE 9





SPONSORSHIP AS A DRIVER FOR GROWTH

LEAGUE & COMPETITION SPONSORSHIPS

League or competition sponsorships are common practice in both women's football and the wider sports industry. The leagues and competitions form the stable structure in which sporting action can take place and are often seen by fans as the historical foundations of the sport they love.

It's this perceived stability which is behind some of the most well-known and respected brands' decisions to sponsor leagues and competitions all around the world.

As women's football has grown, league and competition sponsorships are becoming increasingly more common and their value is steadily rising. Six of the seven leagues focused on in this paper have a league title sponsor for the 2024/25 season, with brands such as Barclays (Women's Super League) and Google Pixel (Frauen Bundesliga) investing in the space.

Although the value of these title sponsorships are modest in comparison to men's football, their growing value is a sign of brands taking note of a rising industry.

Women's Super League sponsor Barclays renewed their title sponsorship in September 2024, doubling their previous investment¹ whilst Google Pixel reportedly increased their sponsorship investment by 247% when they took over from Flyeralarm as the title sponsor of the Frauen Bundesliga^{41 55}.

Notably, one of the most commercially successful leagues, the NWSL, does not have a title sponsor with the league opting for a series of partners across a broad range of industries with brands such as Adobe, Ally, Amazon, Delta, Google Pixel, EA SPORTS, Nationwide and Nike.

When analysing how brands activate both title sponsorships and other league and competition partnerships in women's football, we have found that many organisations utilise the space to promote and grow the women's game as a whole.

By sponsoring a competition rather than a team or athlete, the brand can position themselves as an enabler and 'part of the movement', whilst using the competition's longevity and trust as a platform for building meaningful connections with the growing fanbase.

As women's leagues and competitions continue to grow in following and become ingrained in sporting communities and society, the importance, as well as the return on investment of early adopters in the space is only expected to grow.

LEAGUES WITH TITLE SPONSOR:



LEAGUES WITHOUT TITLE SPONSOR:

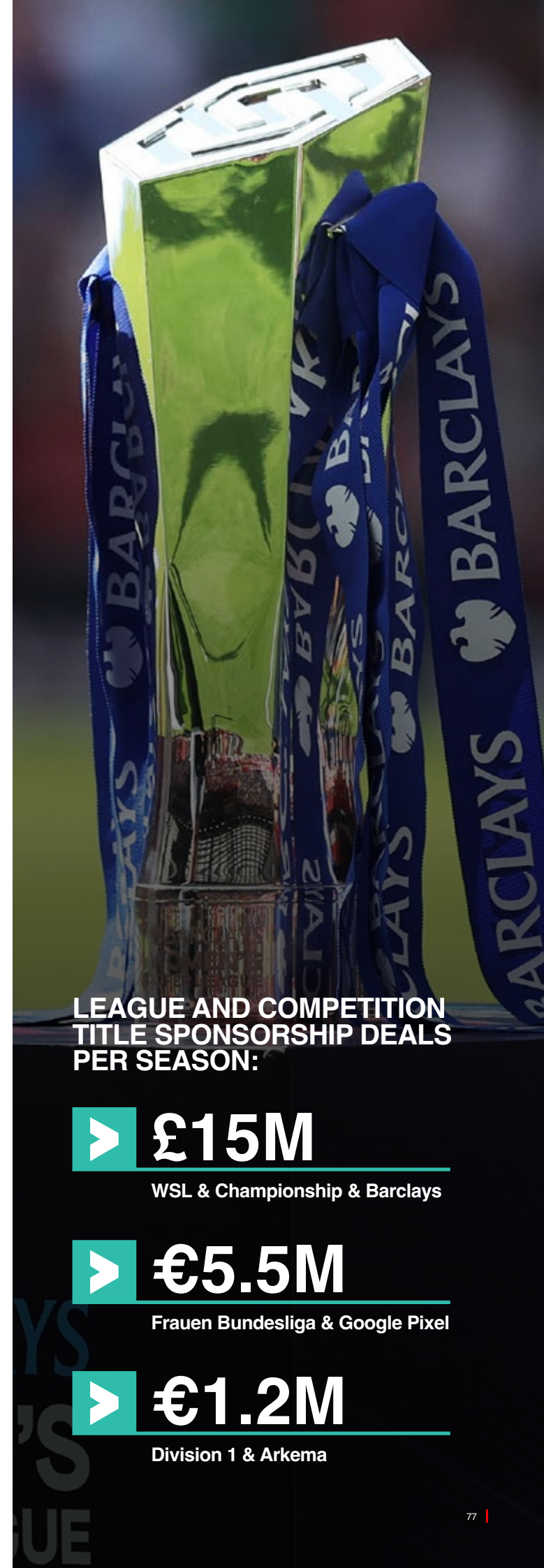


LEAGUE AND COMPETITION TITLE SPONSORSHIP DEALS PER SEASON:

➤ **£15M**
WSL & Championship & Barclays

➤ **€5.5M**
Frauen Bundesliga & Google Pixel

➤ **€1.2M**
Division 1 & Arkema



Adobe Women's FA Cup

Ahead of the 2023/24 season, SPORTFIVE were appointed on behalf of The Football Association (The FA) to identify and secure a new Title Partner for the Women's FA Cup.

The primary objective was to find a partner that would help supercharge excitement and engagement around the competition, as well as deliver commercial impact and accelerate the growth of the women's game - acting as a catalyst to inspire future generations.

SPORTFIVE identified Adobe as the ideal candidate for The FA's Title Sponsor opportunity. Here, Adobe's position as the world's most recognised brand for creativity as well as the organisation's track record for meaningful marketing campaigns were key.

SPORTFIVE worked closely with both parties to broker the partnership and develop a commercial proposition which saw the competition renamed to the "Adobe Women's FA Cup".

The partnership seeks to create a meaningful sponsorship by educating audiences on the breadth and depth of the historic competition, enabling and empowering fans, clubs and players with the right tools to share their unique creative stories, and in turn grow support for the competition and women's game as a whole.

The first-of-its-kind partnership which prioritises helping clubs enhance how they engage with fans, saw Adobe offer all 512 clubs that participate in the competition with training on and free access to Adobe Express Premium Plans. Adobe Express is an AI first, all-in-one content creation app that empowers clubs to create stand out marketing and brand content such as social media reels and posts, flyers, newsletters and much more. Clubs can also use the app's content scheduling feature which means players don't have to worry about posting social content minutes before hitting the pitch and can collaborate on marketing projects with their team, delivering a consistent look and feel across all marketing content.

The partnership also fuelled the launch of new Adobe Women's FA Cup social media channels on Instagram and TikTok within the first few months, which has seen resounding success where metrics such as followers, views and engagements have all increased by more than 1,200% in the first year.

[Read more success stories](#)



Adobe's partnership has facilitated continued growth of women's football. It has been the catalyst for increased engagement with fans both at matches and online. It has directly supported clubs with marketing software and expertise. Their innovative approach to the partnership has enabled us to take the Women's FA Cup to new heights.

JAMES GRAY, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, THE FA



Women's football is full of creativity and bursting with stories untold, and so many of these stories are hidden in amateur teams participating in the Adobe Women's FA Cup. From the start, we saw the potential our creative tools such as Adobe Express had in helping bring the stories of clubs, players and fans to life, in turn elevating the competition to new heights.

SIMON MORRIS, VICE PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL MARKETING, ADOBE

200K

NEW CHANNEL FOLLOWERS

76M+

CONTENT VIEWS (+2,336% YOY)

108M

CONTENT IMPRESSIONS

4.49%

ENGAGEMENT RATE

+120

CLUBS UTILISING FREE ACCESS TO ADOBE EXPRESS





(IMAGE CREDIT: CUPRA)

SPONSORSHIP AS A DRIVER FOR GROWTH

ATHLETE SPONSORSHIPS

The rise of women's football has coincided with the advancements in the quantity and value of female athlete sponsorship.

Instead of brands typically centering themselves around traditional rightsholders such as leagues, competitions and teams, athlete sponsorships see brands partner directly with the individual sportsperson to achieve objectives related to awareness, engagement and brand image.

These sponsorships help to remove corporate barriers by humanising brands and personifying their values, providing a platform that consumers can relate to on a personal level. The birth of user generated content and social media has amplified the role of athletes in society and brought athlete sponsorships to the fore.

As highlighted above, this has been particularly prominent in women's football, where female footballers are proving effective influencers. By driving twice the amount of engagements on social media relative to male athletes⁴⁵, female players deliver better performance for any branded content

partnership offering an attractive proposition to brands to drive cut through and impact.

Partnerships with female footballers have also proved to generate positive brand equity. Research shows that women's sport is perceived as more 'inspiring', 'progressive' and 'family-orientated' compared to men's³⁰.



The rise of women's sports presents untapped market potential for brands. Organisations that invest in female athletes can establish themselves as pioneers in supporting gender equality and align with the sport's positive values, enhancing their reputation and resonating with fans.

DR. POPI SOTIRIADOU, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SPORT MANAGEMENT, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA

More specific to women's football, our research highlights that the values most closely associated with women's football are 'Team spirit and cooperation', 'Commitment and ambition' and 'Authenticity and honesty'³⁹.

We're witnessing a new era of behavioural shifts where authenticity and trust in brand partnerships is fundamental. Female footballers therefore offer social capital which should be leveraged.

This has been recognised amongst premium brands from a wide array of industries opting to partner with female athletes. One only needs to look at the captains of some of the national teams and markets highlighted in this report to see how brands perceive prominent players in the women's game (See Figure 10 on the following page).

From tech giants Samsung and Dyson to financial services such as Mastercard and Visa, as well as plenty of other major brands such as META, Allianz, Pepsi and LEGO along the way, the sample of the six national team captains for Australia, England, France, Germany, Spain and the USA shows the value that brands are placing on female football players.

As many industries are seeing a shift in consumer behaviour towards preferred brand marketing and a desire for authentic and meaningful storytelling, the importance of the individual athletes and their platforms is only expected to grow.



Female football players serve as powerful testimonials generating positive brand equity. Their stories are inspiring a new generation of football fans, driving opportunities for brands to enter the space and reach a new and engaged fanbase.

ELERI GUY, DIRECTOR GLOBAL ATHLETES AND WOMEN'S SPORT CO-LEAD, SPORTFIVE

SPONSORSHIPS AS A DRIVER FOR
GROWTH IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

ATHLETE SPONSORSHIPS



NATIONAL TEAM CAPTAINS AND A SELECTION OF THEIR SPONSORS

ATHLETE SPONSORSHIPS

MORE FEMALE ATHLETES ARE BECOMING ROLE MODELS



**% OF THE TOP 25
MOST MARKETABLE
ATHLETES ARE
WOMEN**

07

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

As discussed throughout this whitepaper, social and cultural influences have had a seismic impact on the development of women's football. The sport has been hindered by external factors including bans, restrictions, social norms and gender stereotypes.

As a result of this, women's football has developed in unique ways and at varying paces in different parts of the world.

In the following section, we analyse women's football in six markets that are at different stages in the development of the sport, but have all seen a marked increase in popularity in recent years.

Here, we seek to understand the market through three categories: **the national team, the domestic league and the fans.**

ANALYSED MARKETS

AUSTRALIA
FRANCE
GERMANY
SPAIN
UK
USA



1982

GERMANY'S FIRST OFFICIAL
NATIONAL TEAM MATCH

2x

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD CUP

8x

UEFA WOMEN'S EUROPEAN
CHAMPIONSHIPS

1x

OLYMPIC GAMES GOLD
MEDALISTS

#3

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS

Correct as of 31/01/2025

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

Germany



Google Pixel Frauen Bundesliga

Semi-Professional

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Brand Sponsorship Research 2025

2,876

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
FOR 2023/2024 SEASON
6% YOY INCREASE

1990

FIRST OFFICIAL WOMEN'S
LEAGUE IS FORMED

€5.5M

ANNUAL SPONSORSHIP
INCOME FROM TITLE
PARTNERSHIP

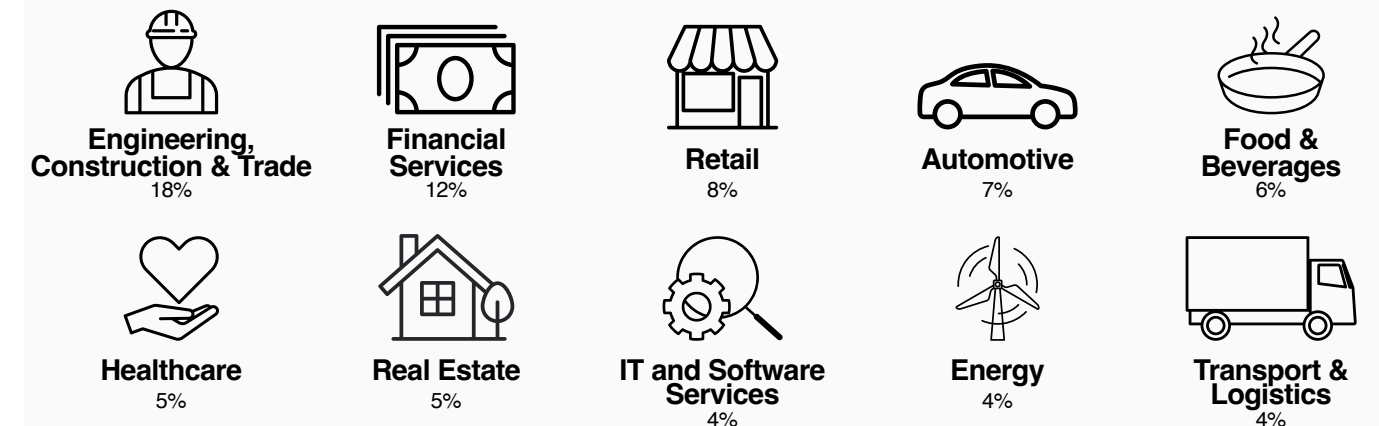
€5.2M

ANNUAL BROADCASTING
INCOME

415

TEAM & LEAGUE
SPONSORS

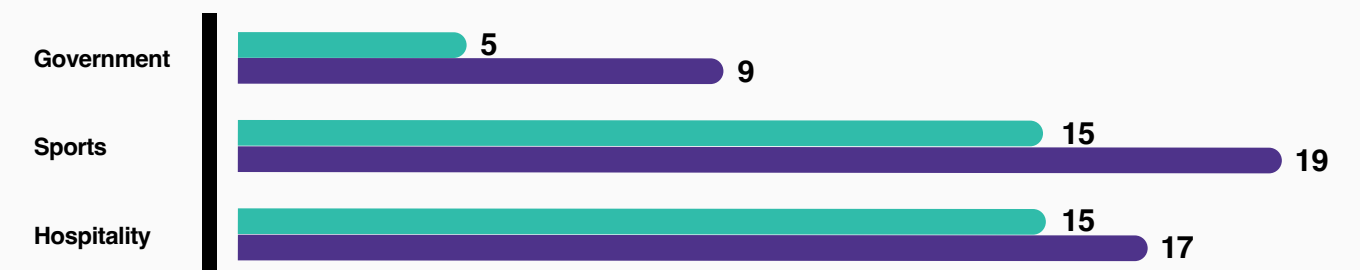
TOP 10 SPONSORING INDUSTRIES:



BRANDS WITH MOST
SPONSORSHIPS



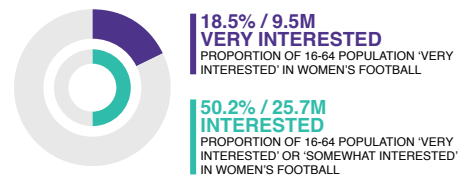
SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN GERMAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
Current country sponsorships vs average sponsorships across the six markets



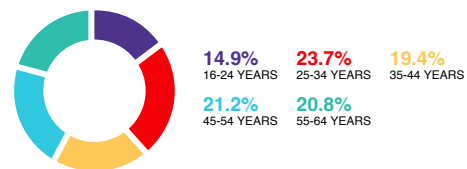
The Fans

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Fan Research 2025

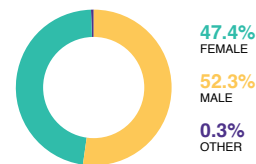
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL INTEREST



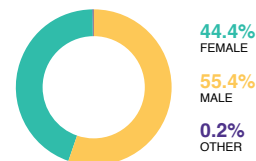
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF GERMAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



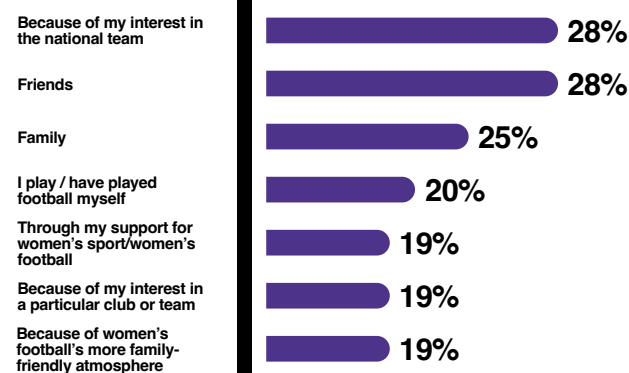
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL...

60%
...WHO ARE MARRIED OR IN A RELATIONSHIP

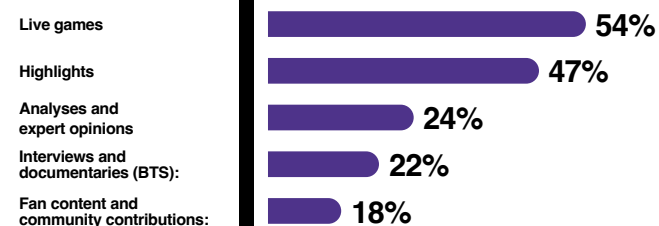
47%
...WHO SUPPORT THE SAME MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TEAMS

38%
...WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD AGED 14 OR UNDER

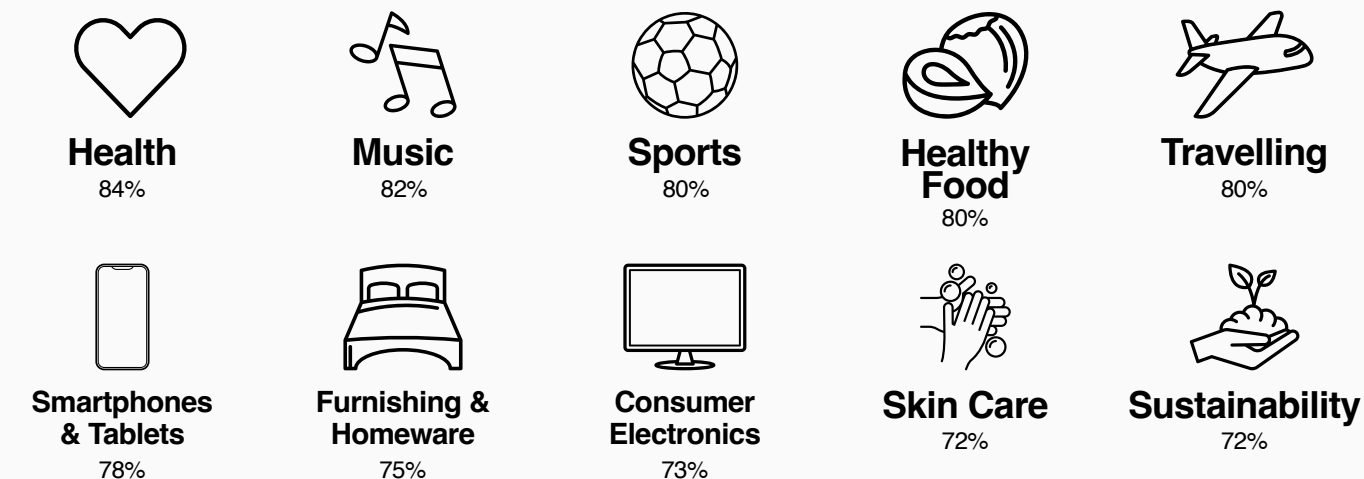
REASONS BEHIND BECOMING A WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FAN



FAVOURITE TYPES OF CONTENT RELATED TO WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS TOP 10 INTERESTS:



MOST USED PLATFORMS USED TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



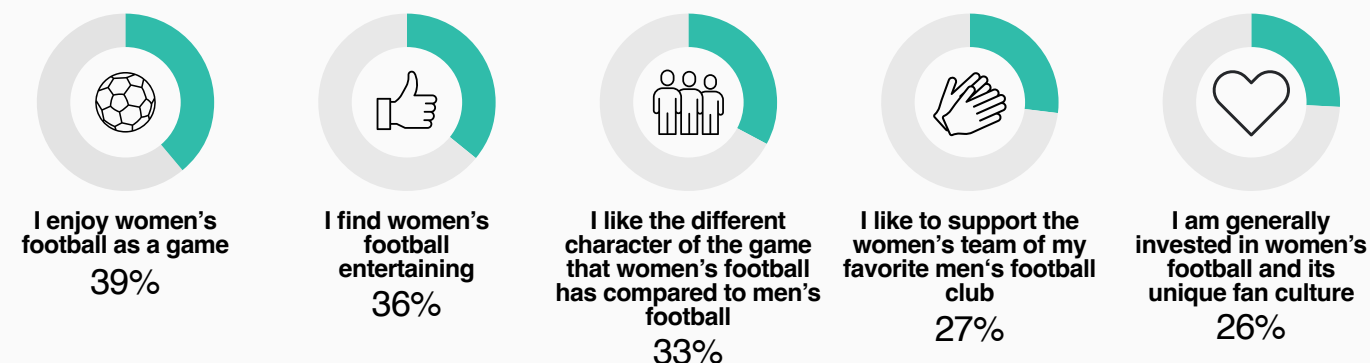
FANS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FEEL THAT...

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'

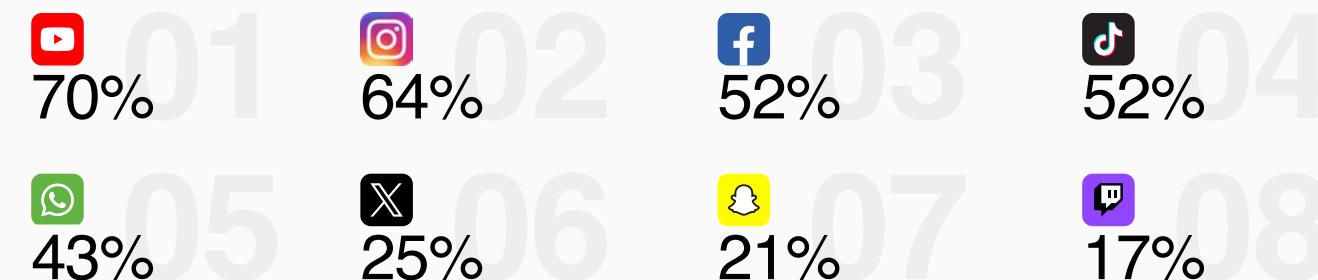
74% ...THEY DON'T SEE ENOUGH COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

72% ...THERE SHOULD BE SPECIFIC CONTENT FORMATS PRODUCED FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

TOP REASONS BEHIND CONTINUED INTEREST IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

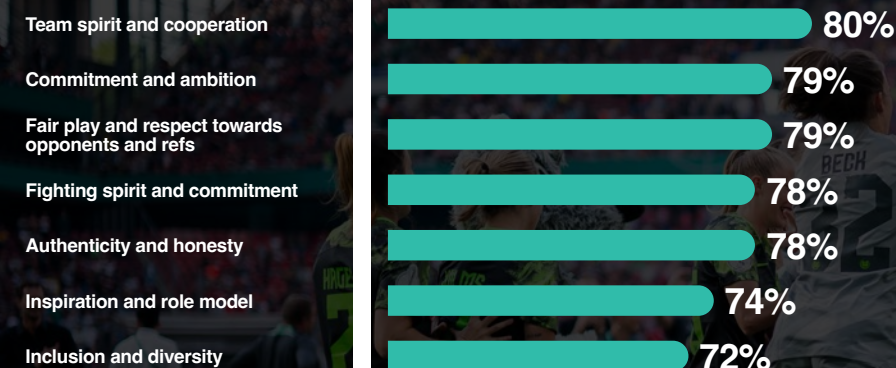


MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



THE VALUES THE GERMAN POPULATION ASSOCIATE WITH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'



50%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS PERCEIVE SPONSORS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TO BE MORE LIKEABLE

73%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS MAKE OR PARTICIPATE IN COMPANY DECISION MAKING PROCESS WHEN PURCHASING NEW PRODUCTS OR SERVICES



”

Women's football in Germany has made **impressive progress.**

We used to fight for attention - today we fill stadiums and feel the growing enthusiasm.

We also want to further strengthen this dynamic at national association level, for example with the bid for the UEFA Women's EURO 2029. Our goal: sustainable structures for the future.

NIA KÜNZER

DFB SPORTS DIRECTOR FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AND FORMER
PROFESSIONAL GERMAN FOOTBALLER



1975

FIRST OFFICIAL NATIONAL
TEAM MATCH

1x

AFC WOMEN'S
ASIAN CUP WINNERS

1x

OFC WOMEN'S
CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS

#15

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

Australia

NINJA
A LEAGUE

The Ninja A league Women

Semi-Professional

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Brand Sponsorship Research 2025

1996

FIRST OFFICIAL WOMEN'S
LEAGUE IS FORMED

2008

A LEAGUE WOMEN IS FORMED
UNDER THE NAME W-LEAGUE

2,248

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
FOR 2023/2024 SEASON

335

NINJA A-LEAGUE WOMEN'S
TEAM AND LEAGUE SPONSORS

A\$40M

ANNUAL BROADCASTING INCOME
(MEN'S AND WOMEN'S)

TOP 10 SPONSORING INDUSTRIES:



Hospitality
11%



Sports
10%



Professional
Services
10%



Engineering,
Construction & Trade
9%



Health &
Wellness
7%



Automotive
6%



Financial Services
5%



Retail
5%

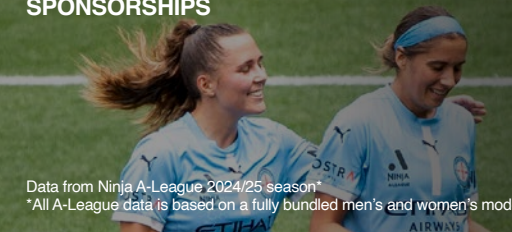


IT & Software Services
5%



Healthcare
5%

BRANDS WITH MOST
SPONSORSHIPS



Data from Ninja A-League 2024/25 season*
*All A-League data is based on a fully bundled men's and women's model

7
McDonald's

5
Asahi

4
Strapit
SPORTSTAPE

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Current country sponsorships vs average sponsorships across the six markets

Financial
services



Food and
beverages



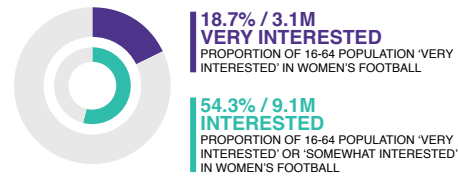
Entertainment



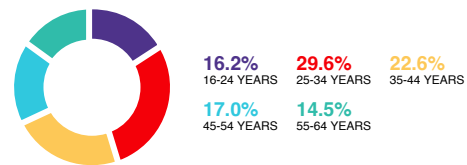
The Fans

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Fan Research 2025

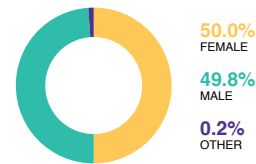
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL INTEREST



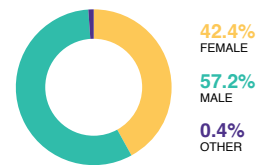
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



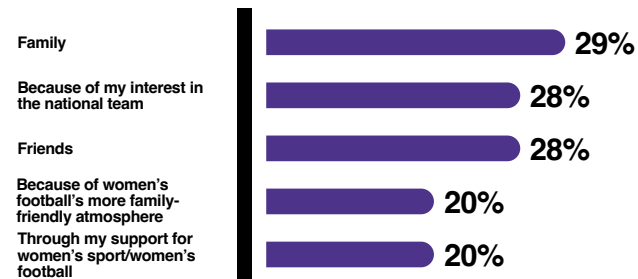
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL...

62%
...WHO ARE MARRIED OR IN A RELATIONSHIP

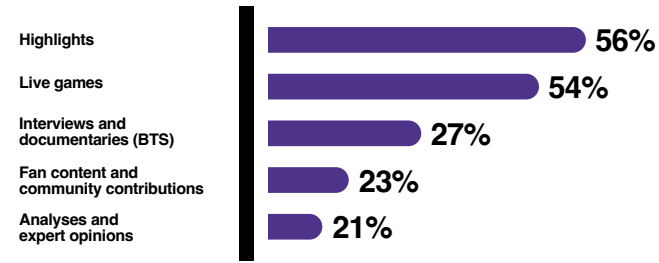
52%
...WHO SUPPORT THE SAME MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TEAMS

48%
...WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD AGED 14 OR UNDER

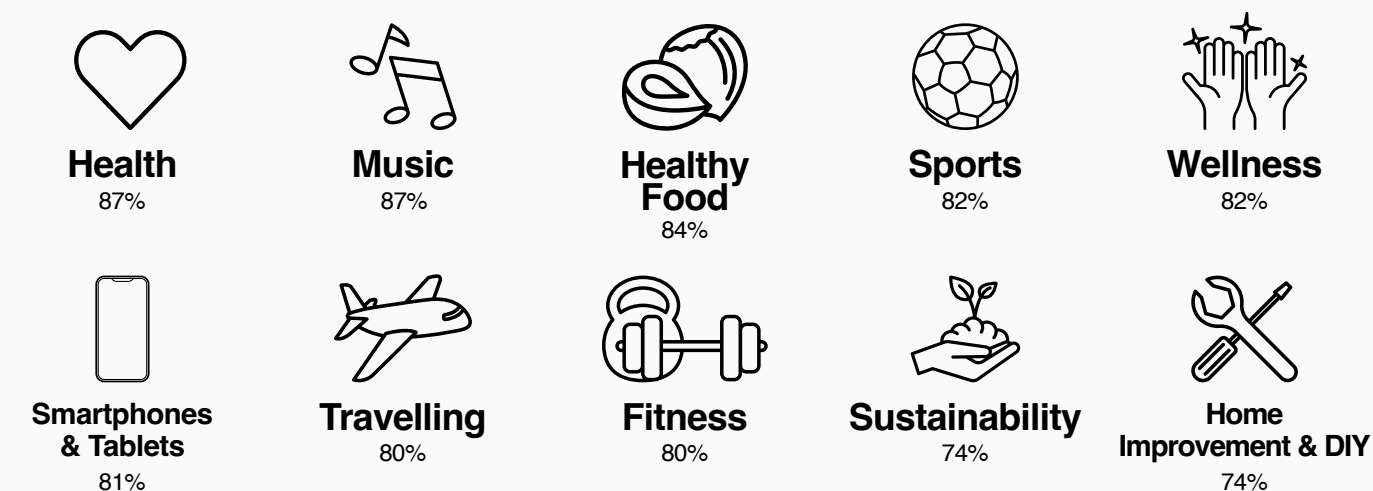
REASONS BEHIND BECOMING A WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FAN



FAVOURITE TYPES OF CONTENT RELATED TO WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS TOP 10 INTERESTS:



MOST USED PLATFORMS USED TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:

54%
TELEVISION

42%
SOCIAL MEDIA

29%
STREAMING

23%
SPORTS NEWS WEBSITES

FANS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FEEL THAT...

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'

75% ...THEY DON'T SEE ENOUGH COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

82% ...THERE SHOULD BE SPECIFIC CONTENT FORMATS PRODUCED FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

TOP REASONS BEHIND CONTINUED INTEREST IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

44%
I enjoy women's football as a game

39%
I find women's football entertaining

32%
I like to support the women's team of my favorite men's football club

28%
I like the different character of the game that women's football has compared to men's football

26%
I am generally invested in women's football and its unique fan culture

MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:

62%

60%

58%

43%

23%

19%

19%

10%

THE VALUES THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION ASSOCIATE WITH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'



64%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS PERCEIVE SPONSORS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TO BE MORE LIKEABLE

77%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS MAKE OR PARTICIPATE IN COMPANY DECISION MAKING PROCESS WHEN PURCHASING NEW PRODUCTS OR SERVICES



1971

FIRST OFFICIAL NATIONAL
TEAM MATCH

#11

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS

Correct as of 31/01/2025

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

France



The Arkema Première Ligue

Fully Professional

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Brand Sponsorship Research 2025

1919

FIRST OFFICIAL WOMEN'S
LEAGUE IS FORMED

1975

DIVISION 1 FÉMININE IS FOUNDED,
NOW UNDER THE NAME ARKEMA
PREMIÈRE LIGUE

1,317

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
FOR 2023/2024 SEASON

133

TEAM AND LEAGUE
SPONSORS

€1.3M

ANNUAL BROADCAST INCOME -
40% INCREASE ON PREVIOUS DEAL

€1.2M

ANNUAL SPONSORSHIP INCOME
FROM TITLE SPONSOR ARKEMA

TOP 10 SPONSORING INDUSTRIES:



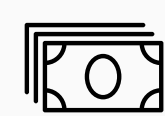
Government
19%



Engineering,
Construction & Trade
15%



Sports
11%



Financial Services
10%



Professional
Services
6%



Automotive
5%



Food & Beverages
5%



Retail
4%



Travel & Tourism
4%



Entertainment
4%

BRANDS WITH MOST
SPONSORSHIPS

* Data from Arkema Première Ligue 2024/2025 season

4

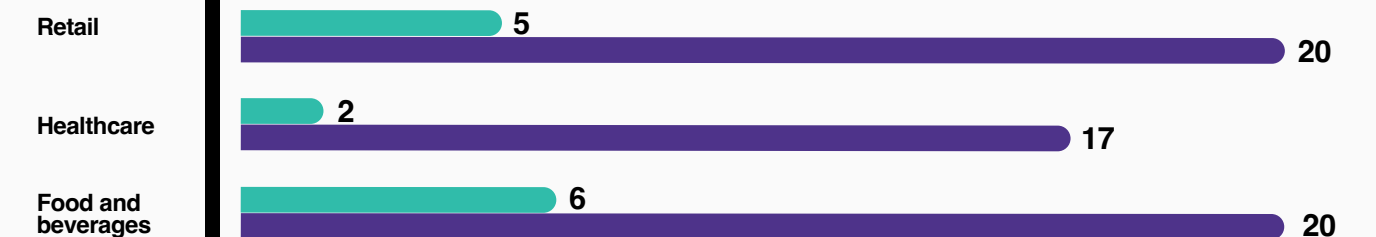


3



SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN FRENCH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

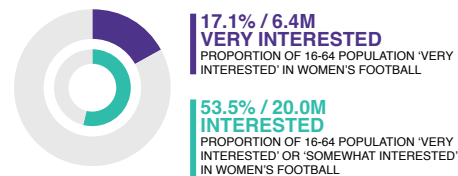
Current country sponsorships vs average sponsorships across the six markets



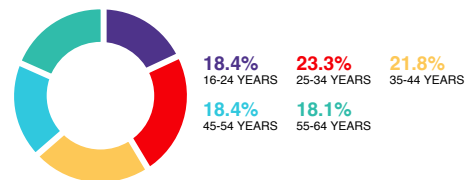
The Fans

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Fan Research 2025

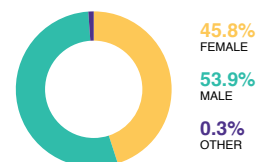
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL INTEREST



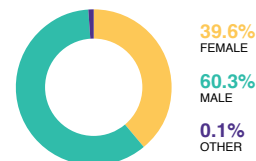
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



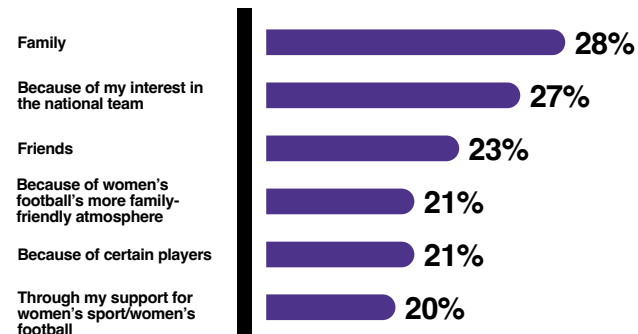
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL...

66%
...WHO ARE MARRIED OR IN A RELATIONSHIP

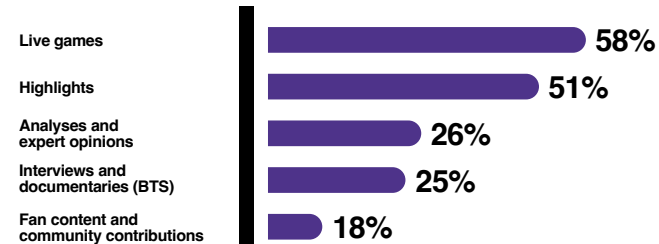
46%
...WHO SUPPORT THE SAME MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TEAMS

48%
...WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD AGED 14 OR UNDER

REASONS BEHIND BECOMING A WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FAN



FAVOURITE TYPES OF CONTENT RELATED TO WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS TOP 10 INTERESTS:



Healthy Food
85%



Health
84%



Music
84%



Travelling
84%



Wellness
83%



Sports
83%



Smartphones & Tablets
79%



Sustainability
76%



Home Improvement & DIY
75%



Skin Care
74%

MOST USED PLATFORMS USED TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



61%
TELEVISION



39%
SOCIAL MEDIA



26%
STREAMING



22%
SPORTS NEWS WEBSITES

FANS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FEEL THAT...

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'

82% ...THEY DON'T SEE ENOUGH COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

82% ...THERE SHOULD BE SPECIFIC CONTENT FORMATS PRODUCED FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

TOP REASONS BEHIND CONTINUED INTEREST IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



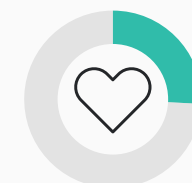
I enjoy women's football as a game
41%



I like the different character of the game that women's football has compared to men's football
39%



I find women's football entertaining
37%



I am generally invested in women's football and its unique fan culture
26%



I like to support the women's team of my favorite men's football club
26%

MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



64%



62%



61%



50%



36%



35%



34%



21%

THE VALUES THE FRENCH POPULATION ASSOCIATE WITH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'

Team spirit and cooperation

82%

Inclusion and diversity

81%

Fair play and respect towards opponents and refs

80%

Commitment and ambition

80%

Fighting spirit and commitment

79%

Authenticity and honesty

79%

Tactics and strategy

79%

Equal rights

78%

63%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS PERCEIVE SPONSORS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TO BE MORE LIKEABLE

81%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS MAKE OR PARTICIPATE IN COMPANY DECISION MAKING PROCESS WHEN PURCHASING NEW PRODUCTS OR SERVICES



1983

FIRST OFFICIAL NATIONAL
TEAM MATCH

1x

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD CUP

1x

UEFA WOMEN'S
NATIONAL LEAGUE

#2

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS

Correct as of 31/01/2025

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

Spain



Liga F

Fully Professional

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Brand Sponsorship Research 2025

1988

FIRST OFFICIAL WOMEN'S
LEAGUE IS FORMED

2021

LIGA F BECOMES
FULLY PROFESSIONAL

1,550

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
FOR 2023/2024 SEASON

243

TEAM AND LEAGUE
SPONSORS

\$8M

ANNUAL BROADCAST
INCOME

TOP 10 SPONSORING INDUSTRIES:



Financial Services
11%



Food & Beverages
11%



Sports
8%



Automotive
7%



Retail
7%



Travel & Tourism
6%



Healthcare
6%



Alcohol
6%



Engineering,
Construction & Trade
5%



Health & Wellness
5%

BRANDS WITH MOST
SPONSORSHIPS

9

Coca-Cola

m MAHOU
SANMIGUEL

4

sorare

Halcón VIAJES



CaixaBank

*Data from Liga F 2024/25 season

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN SPAIN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Current country sponsorships vs average sponsorships across the six markets

Engineering,
construction
and trade



Professional
Services



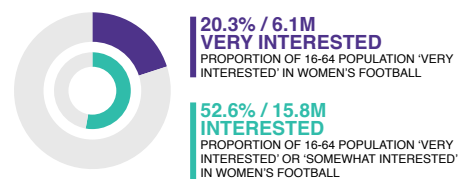
Hospitality



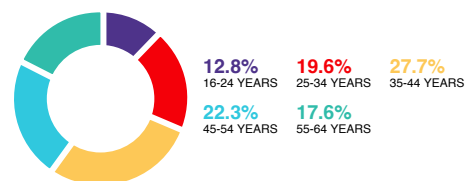
The Fans

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Fan Research 2025

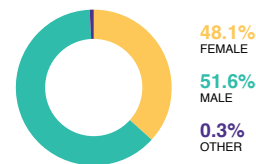
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL INTEREST



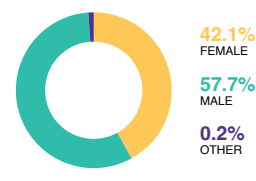
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SPAIN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



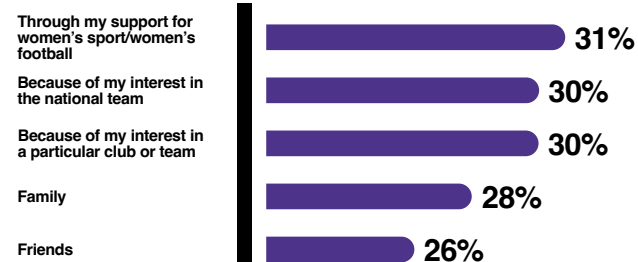
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL...

73%
...WHO ARE MARRIED OR IN A RELATIONSHIP

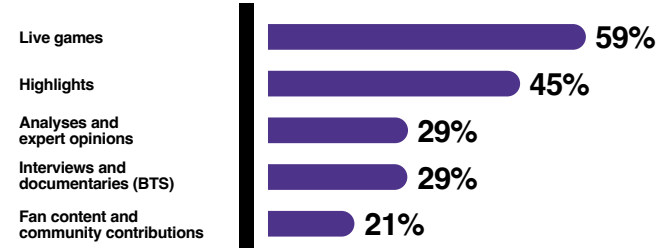
68%
...WHO SUPPORT THE SAME MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TEAMS

50%
...WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD AGED 14 OR UNDER

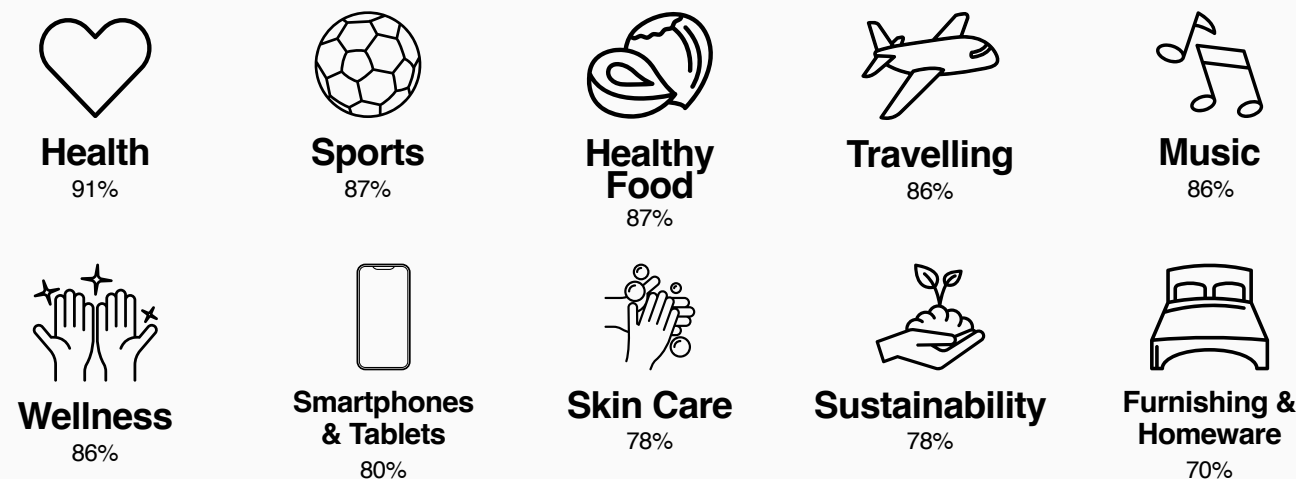
REASONS BEHIND BECOMING A WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FAN



FAVOURITE TYPES OF CONTENT RELATED TO WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS TOP 10 INTERESTS:



MOST USED PLATFORMS USED TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



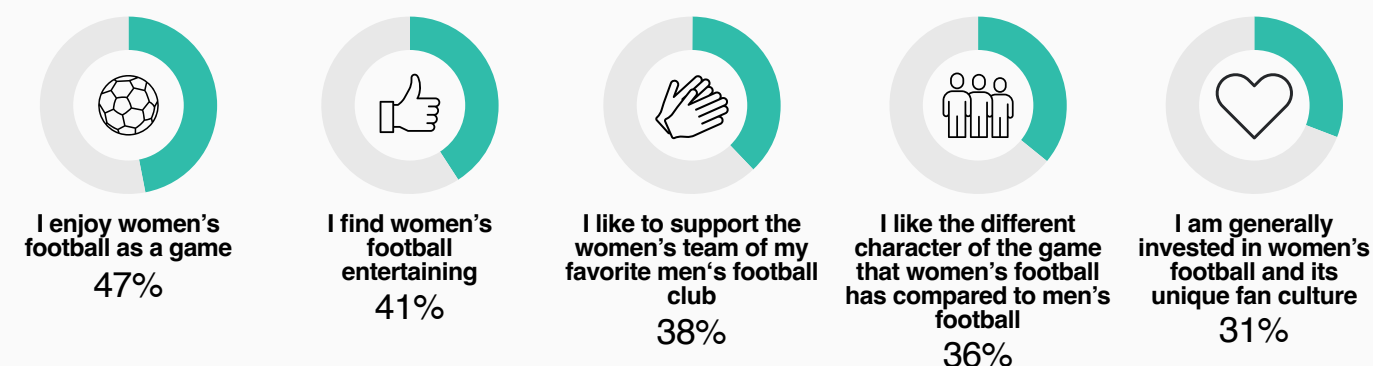
FANS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FEEL THAT...

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'

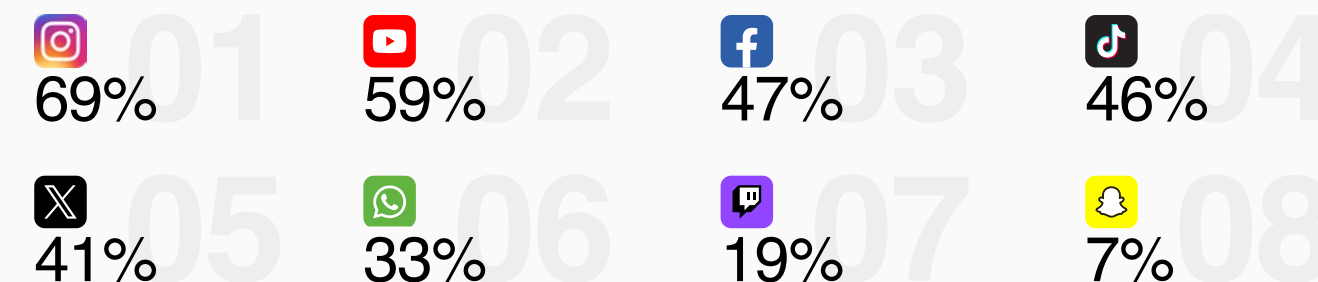
77% ...THEY DON'T SEE ENOUGH COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

85% ...THERE SHOULD BE SPECIFIC CONTENT FORMATS PRODUCED FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

TOP REASONS BEHIND CONTINUED INTEREST IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

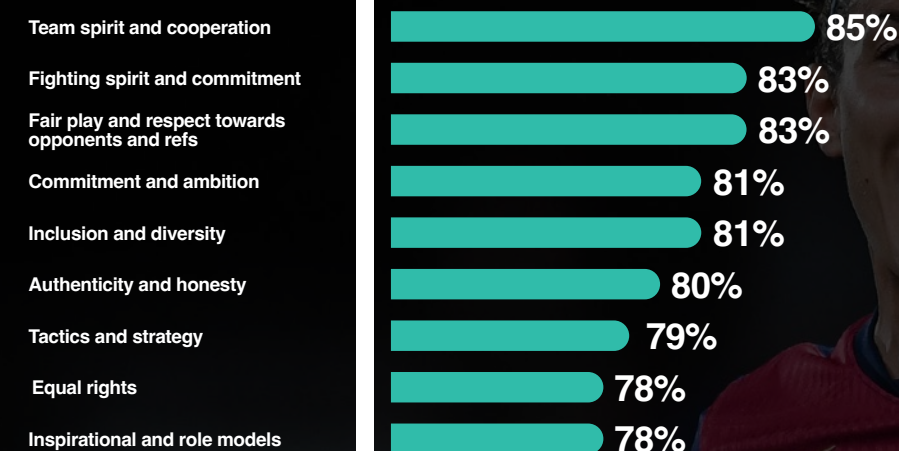


MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



THE VALUES THE SPANISH POPULATION ASSOCIATE WITH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'



63%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS PERCEIVE SPONSORS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TO BE MORE LIKEABLE

79%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS MAKE OR PARTICIPATE IN COMPANY DECISION MAKING PROCESS WHEN PURCHASING NEW PRODUCTS OR SERVICES



ENGLAND

1972

FIRST OFFICIAL MATCH

#4

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS
Correct as of 31/01/2025

2022

CROWNED UEFA WOMEN'S
EURO CHAMPIONS



SCOTLAND

1972

FIRST OFFICIAL
NATIONAL TEAM MATCH

#24

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS
Correct as of 31/01/2025

WALES

1993

FIRST OFFICIAL
NATIONAL TEAM MATCH

#30

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS
Correct as of 31/01/2025

NORTHERN IRELAND

1973

FIRST OFFICIAL
NATIONAL TEAM MATCH

#44

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS
Correct as of 31/01/2025

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

UK



Barclays Women's Super League

Fully Professional

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Brand Sponsorship Research 2025

1991

THE FIRST WOMEN'S FOOTBALL LEAGUE
SINCE THE BAN WAS LIFTED IS FORMED

2010

THE WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE
(WSL) IS ESTABLISHED

7,363

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
FOR 2023/2024 SEASON
41.1% YOY INCREASE

184

BARCLAYS WSL
SPONSORS

£13M

ANNUAL BROADCAST
INCOME
AN 81% INCREASE ON PREVIOUS DEAL

£4M

AVERAGE CLUB REVENUE
FOR WSL CLUBS IN 2022/23
48% INCREASE ON PREVIOUS SEASON

TOP 10 SPONSORING INDUSTRIES:



Retail
12%



Financial
Services
11%



Food & Beverages
11%



Sports
10%



Engineering,
Construction & Trade
7%



IT & Software
Services
7%



Alcohol
6%



Travel & Tourism
6%

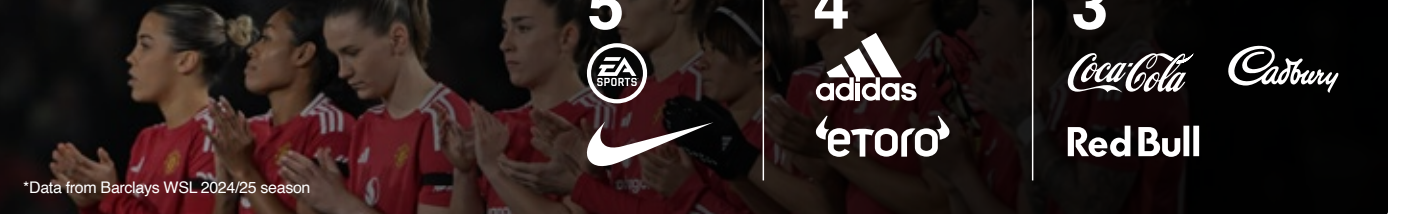


Automotive
5%



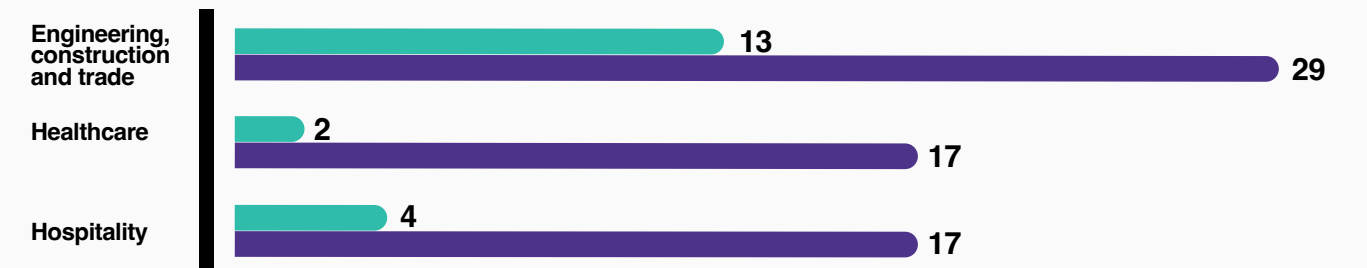
Entertainment
4%

BRANDS WITH MOST SPONSORSHIPS



SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN UK WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Current country sponsorships vs average sponsorships across the six markets

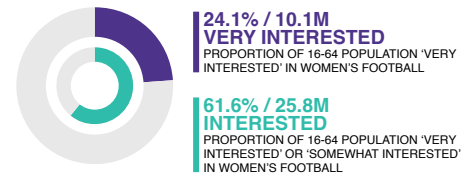




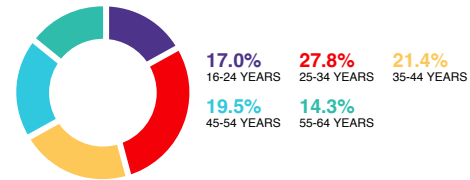
The Fans

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Fan Research 2025

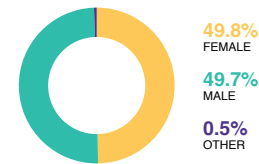
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL INTEREST



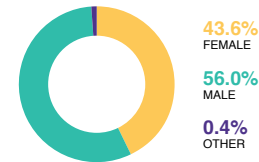
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF UK WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



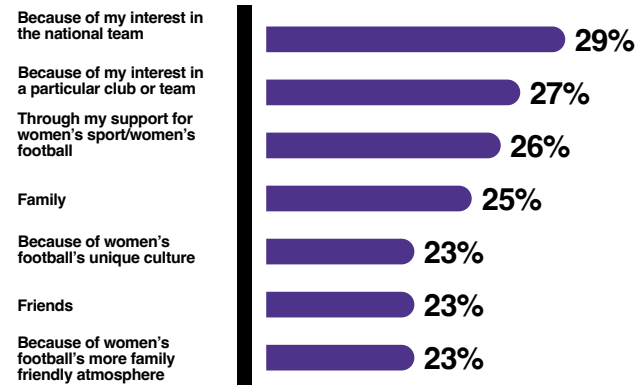
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL...

65%
...WHO ARE MARRIED OR IN A RELATIONSHIP

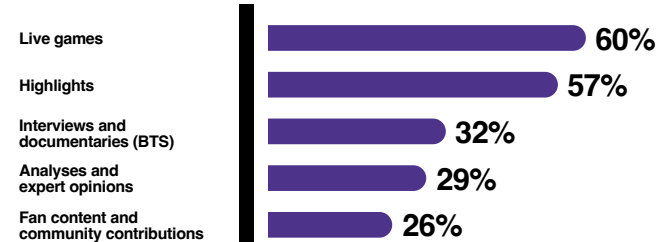
62%
...WHO SUPPORT THE SAME MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TEAMS

50%
...WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD AGED 14 OR UNDER

REASONS BEHIND BECOMING A WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FAN



FAVOURITE TYPES OF CONTENT RELATED TO WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS TOP 10 INTERESTS:



MOST USED PLATFORMS USED TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



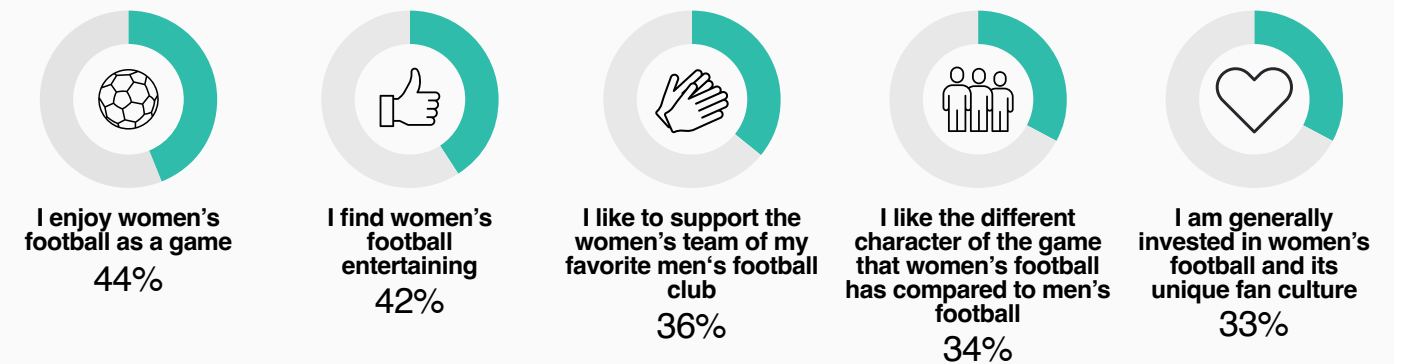
FANS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FEEL THAT...

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'

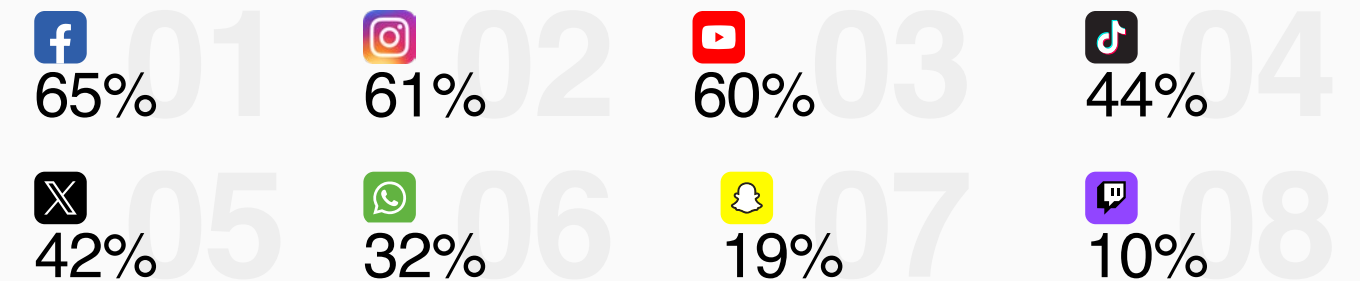
72% ...THEY DON'T SEE ENOUGH COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

82% ...THERE SHOULD BE SPECIFIC CONTENT FORMATS PRODUCED FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

TOP REASONS BEHIND CONTINUED INTEREST IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



THE VALUES THE UK POPULATION ASSOCIATE WITH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'



65%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS PERCEIVE SPONSORS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TO BE MORE LIKEABLE

81%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS MAKE OR PARTICIPATE IN COMPANY DECISION MAKING PROCESS WHEN PURCHASING NEW PRODUCTS OR SERVICES



1985

FIRST OFFICIAL NATIONAL
TEAM MATCH

4x

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD CUP

5x

OLYMPIC GAMES
GOLD MEDALISTS

9x

CONCACAF WOMEN'S
CHAMPIONSHIP CHAMPIONS

#1

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD RANKINGS

Correct as of 31/01/2025

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

USA



National Women's Soccer League

Fully Professional

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Brand Sponsorship Research 2025

2012

THE NWSL IS FORMED AS THE UNITED
STATES SOLE FULLY PROFESSIONAL
WOMEN'S SOCCER LEAGUE

11,235

AVERAGE LEAGUE
ATTENDANCE

\$15.4M

AVERAGE CLUB REVENUE FOR
NWSL CLUBS FOR 2024
59% YOY INCREASE

\$60M

ANNUAL BROADCAST
INCOME
3,900% INCREASE ON PREVIOUS DEAL

\$250M

ANGEL CITY'S VALUATION, THE HIGHEST
VALUATION EVER FOR A WOMEN'S
PROFESSIONAL SPORTS TEAM

341

NWSL SPONSORS

TOP 10 SPONSORING INDUSTRIES:



Healthcare
13%



Alcohol
10%



Hospitality
10%



Financial Services
9%



Food & Beverages
8%



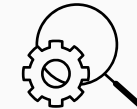
Retail
8%



Engineering,
Construction & Trade
6%



Health &
Wellness
5%



IT & Software
Services
5%



Professional
Services
4%

BRANDS WITH MOST SPONSORSHIPS

5



4



3



*Data from NWSL 2024/25 season

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN US WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Current country sponsorships vs average sponsorships across the six markets

Sports

8

19

Engineering,
construction
and trade

19

29

Government

2

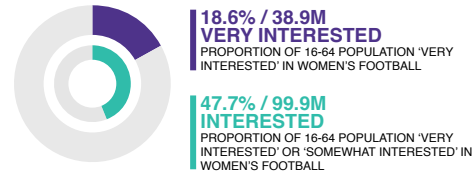
9



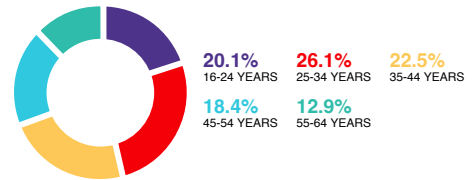
The Fans

Source: SPORTFIVE Women's Football Fan Research 2025

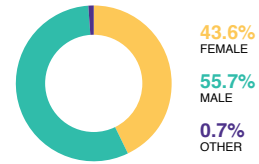
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL INTEREST



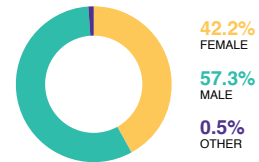
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF US WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



FOOTBALL FANS BY GENDER



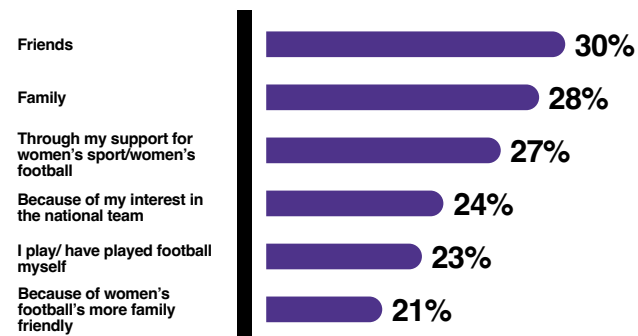
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL...

46%
...WHO ARE MARRIED OR IN A RELATIONSHIP

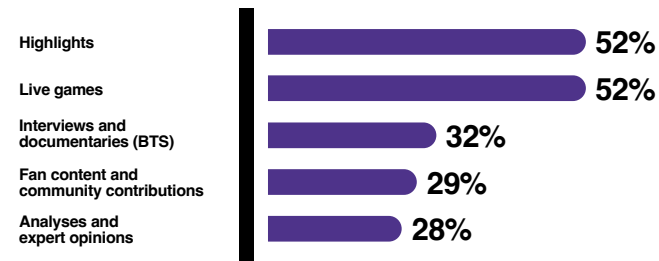
47%
...WHO SUPPORT THE SAME MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TEAMS

41%
...WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD AGED 14 OR UNDER

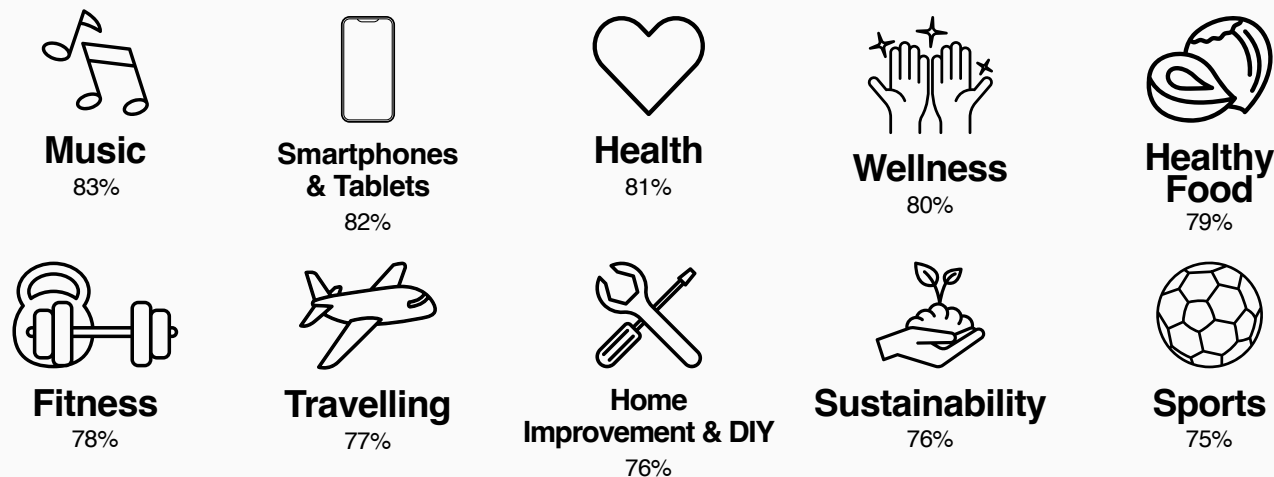
REASONS BEHIND BECOMING A WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FAN



FAVOURITE TYPES OF CONTENT RELATED TO WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS TOP 10 INTERESTS:



MOST USED PLATFORMS USED TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



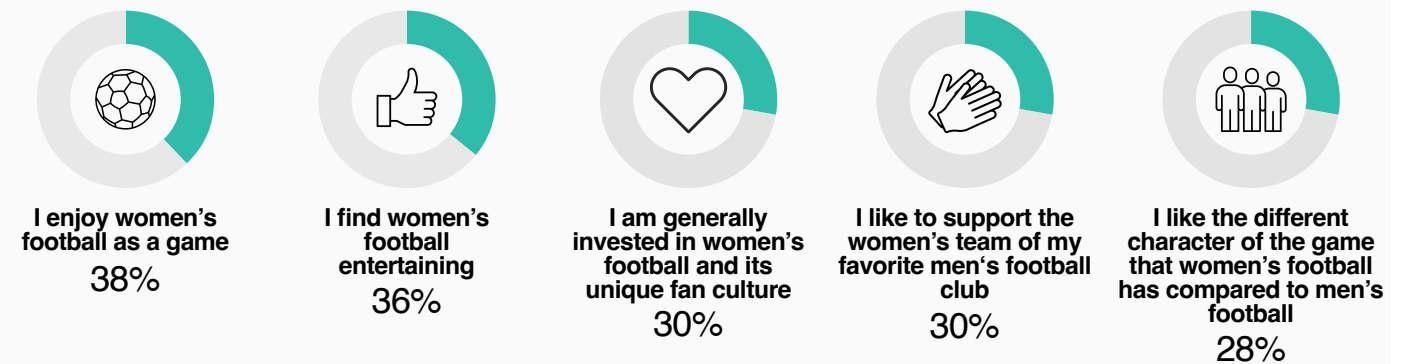
FANS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FEEL THAT...

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'

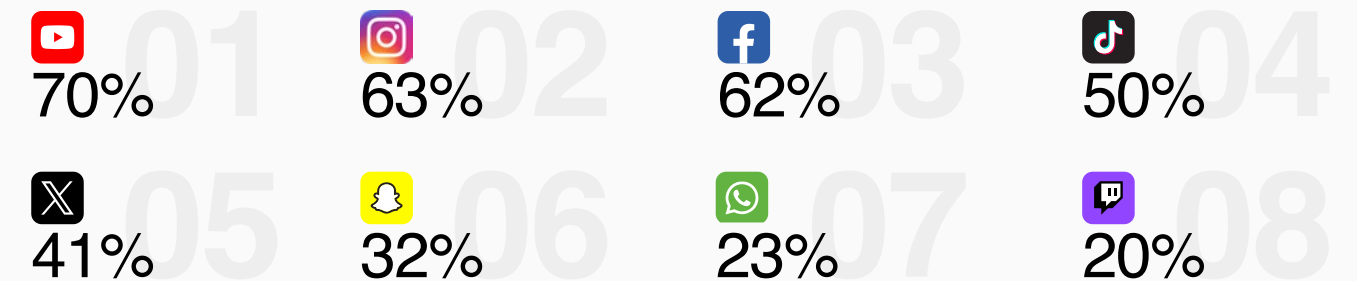
73% ...THEY DON'T SEE ENOUGH COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

80% ...THERE SHOULD BE SPECIFIC CONTENT FORMATS PRODUCED FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

TOP REASONS BEHIND CONTINUED INTEREST IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

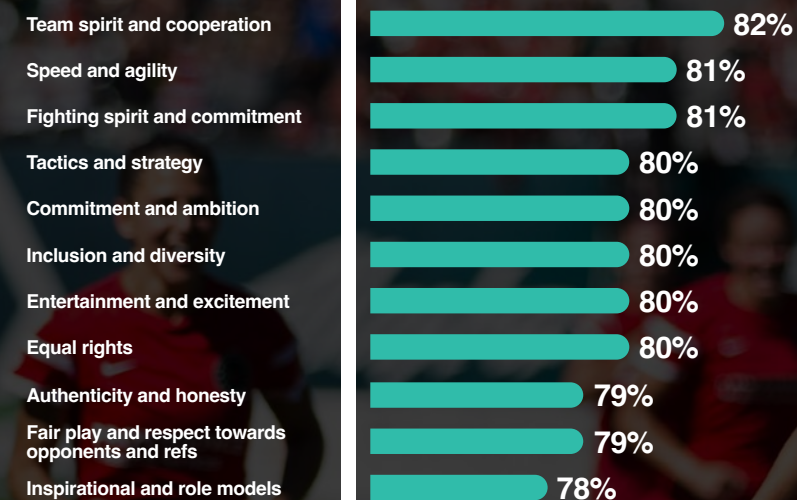


MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL:



THE VALUES THE US POPULATION ASSOCIATE WITH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Respondents who answered 'Fully agree' or 'Somewhat agree'



66%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS PERCEIVE SPONSORS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TO BE MORE LIKEABLE

86%
OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FANS MAKE OR PARTICIPATE IN COMPANY DECISION MAKING PROCESS WHEN PURCHASING NEW PRODUCTS OR SERVICES



Women's football in the U.S. has evolved from a moment to a movement.

The NWSL is a testament to the power of this evolution, attracting global talent, innovative sponsorships, and record-breaking broadcast deals.

Of particular note is the shift in investments beyond traditional sports brands.

We're seeing industries like beauty, wellness, and technology recognize the value of engaging with this unique, family-oriented fanbase.

The commercial potential is undeniable, and we're only just beginning to tap into it.

MARTINA BOZIC

VICE PRESIDENT, FOOTBALL PARTNERSHIPS, NORTH AMERICA, SPORTFIVE

08

WHAT NEXT FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL?

The aim of this report is to help brands, rightsholders, media platforms and fans understand the value of women's football.

In short, women's football is the most valuable women's sport in the world, making up more than 45% of the total revenue of the global women's sport industry⁶. In full, the value of women's football goes far beyond its monetary worth; it provides tangible context to the societal issues that have, and continue to, face women all over the world.

Women's football's past has created the value that it holds today and has moulded a sport with a one-of-a-kind culture that encompasses a truly unique group of players and a fanbase to match, but what does the future hold for the women's game?

Throughout this report and its accompanying research, we have highlighted five areas that are catalysing the growth of women's football: fans, media, athletes, brands and the history of women's football.

When looking beyond this current period of growth, we believe that these catalysts will all continue to play a significant role as the sport develops. Within these, we believe that there are four specific areas that rightsholders, media platforms, brands and fans will all have to work to further evolve for the long-term future of the sport:

01

SOLVING THE BROADCASTING RIDDLE

02

POWER TO THE PLAYERS

03

TO BUNDLE OR NOT TO BUNDLE?

04

THE BOTTOM LINE

€500M

THE ESTIMATED GLOBAL YEARLY REVENUE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL, MAKING IT THE MOST VALUABLE WOMEN'S SPORT IN THE WORLD, BUT ITS VALUE GOES FAR BEYOND ITS MONETARY WORTH.



WHAT NEXT FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL?

SOLVING THE BROADCASTING RIDDLE

Arguably one of the biggest challenges that the women's football industry has faced in its new era of expansion is delivering the optimal media landscape.

The historic suppression of women's sport has led to a number of issues that have surfaced within the women's football's media environment, including a lack of consistency and accessibility of live broadcasts and non-traditional platform hubs, low production quality, non-tailored programme formatting to women's football fans, as well as learned behaviours from broadcasters that typically favour men's sport.

To solve these issues and help grow the game, we have outlined four key areas that both rightsholders and media organisations need to consider carefully in the coming years.

A key issue that exists throughout women's football is a lack of understanding of fans and their behaviours. The relatively rapid rise of the sport has meant that many stakeholders, including media organisations, don't yet have a full understanding of who women's football fans are and how they consume.

Here, data is key. Key stakeholders looking to increase investment and coverage of women's football have to acquire key proof points of the sport's current and potential value to media organisations.

The existing data is already playing a pivotal role in growing the game. Audience figures from free-to-air national team coverage have not only shown that there is a clear interest in women's football, but SPORTFIVE's research has also proved that it is delivering sustained fandom.

Although this won't be the optimal long term solution, targeting reach over revenues will help establish the sport, increase eyeballs, deliver sponsorships and develop the mid-term media rights revenues.

Generating a commercial income from this increased reach will be important for reinvesting in the sport's media infrastructure. For women's football to continue to grow, increased production investment is needed to strengthen the broadcast production quality and deliver a premium product and continue attracting new audiences.

Finally, rightsholders and media organisations need to collaborate to adapt the rights packages to women's football's unique fanbase. Whilst more research is needed to better understand the sport's growing fanbase, early indicators are suggesting that women's football fans have different consumption habits to the men's game that media platforms are tailored to.

By providing multiple packages to address various fan groups, including placing athletes, influencers and ambassadors at the heart of the broadcast, media organisations can better capture the interest of these fans.

Interest in women's football has never been higher, now is the time for media platforms to develop an offering that can turn this interest into sustained habitual viewership



Data is key for sponsors and media in women's football, offering insights into fans, demographics, and trends. It helps brands make informed decisions and showcase the growing value of women's sports and its media reach.

PHILIPP HASENBEIN, COO SPORTFIVE



The women's media rights landscape requires all stakeholders to understand and therefore work together, forming a strong, consumer driven product. Local and global stars need to be developed and modern production setups need to be established to target a diverse set of fans.

The industry needs to understand that women's sport is beyond the stage of a „charity“ when it comes to generating value for broadcasters and brands within media. It's not a modern movement or a hype wave, there is a clear desire to watch and consume women sports, if it's presented and built in an engaging way.

ERIK STEINMEYER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GLOBAL MEDIA, SPORTFIVE



WHAT NEXT FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL?

POWER TO THE PLAYERS

Women's football owes much of its rise from enforced obscurity to the growing global game we see today to so many, but perhaps most notable on that list is the players.

When women were banned from playing football, it was the players who fought back, kept playing and helped overturn the ban. Once it was lifted, players helped rebuild and expand the infrastructure, setting the foundations for future generations.

Today, players are reaping the rewards and following in the footsteps of these early pioneers as they continue to take change into their own hands by championing causes to develop the game.

Not only are female football players being heard, but their voices now carry a sense of purpose and relatability in the public eye which stretches beyond that of most athletes.

We believe that this elevated importance that individual players have within the women's game will continue to play a major part in how the sport develops.

Brands have been ahead of the curve with understanding the influence and engagement that players can provide, with many of the game's leading stars amassing a portfolio of well known sponsors.

In the short term, this is predominantly providing more opportunities for the game's biggest names, but as visibility continues to rise, more players are expected to see increased profiles and as a result, brand recognition.

As player sponsorships continue to gain popularity and the sport grows, it will be important for brands to adapt messaging towards more traditional sports-led marketing that has less direct focus on 'equality' and 'inclusion', so as to avoid an inflation of these types of messages.

Recognising the unique importance of players as a collective in the women's game, whilst still ensuring the divide between the players at the very top of women's football and those below doesn't grow too great, will be a key topic for governing bodies and rights holders in the years to come.

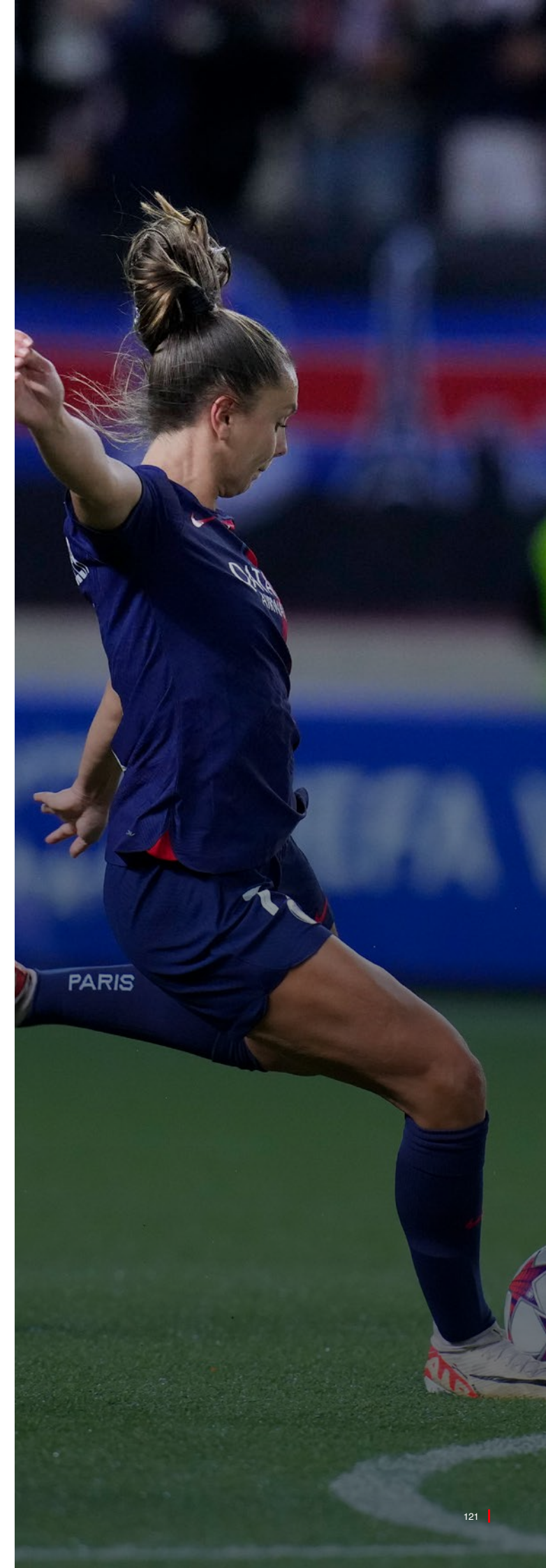
UEFA's recent mandate for player prize money for the UEFA Women's European Championships 2025, which obligates participating national associations to allocate between 30-40% of the total distributions received to its players¹¹, is a clear sign of players' importance to the future of the game.

The importance of players is also expected to grow in the women's football media landscape, where media platforms will have to innovate to consistently capture women's football fans as an audience. With many players amassing a greater following than teams or leagues, media platforms could choose to focus their content on players to engage audiences.



With more female footballers becoming role models, brands should tap into the power of these platforms and capitalise on the opportunity to combine their increasing influence with impactful storytelling.

RON WIEGAND, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT GLOBAL ATHLETES, SPORTFIVE





WHAT NEXT FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL?

TO BUNDLE OR NOT TO BUNDLE?

Many women's football teams are closely linked with a men's team or a club which has traditionally centred around men's football. 74% of the teams from the six markets surveyed in this paper are part of a club which was initially founded as a men's team, with the NWSL accounting for 14 of the 20 teams that are not directly associated with or founded as men's clubs.

Women's teams typically receive financial contributions from their associated men's club as recognition for the investment needed to regrow the sport after 50 years in the dark. At the top end, this sees the women's teams with the highest revenue receive an average of €1.5 million per season from their men's teams⁶.

Traditionally, men's and women's teams have also been closely linked through their commercial partnerships, where rights to the women's game were typically 'bundled' on to the men's rights.

These investments have been vital to the rebuilding of the women's game, but as women's football has, for the first time in over a century, started to recover and reclaim its popularity, many rightsholders are

reassessing the need for women's specific partnerships, completely unbundled from the men's game.

This move has already seen FIFA unbundle commercial rights for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, as well as completely separating the media rights for the men's and women's tournaments ahead of the 2027 edition in Brazil¹⁴.

For clubs, bundled commercial agreements are still the norm, with only 38% of all global professional women's football clubs having a dedicated women's only main sponsor and 25% of clubs negotiating an independent kit sponsor¹⁵. Although the majority of clubs are still operating in a bundled system, teams are opening up to unbundling, most notably in more established women's leagues.

The NWSL, the top U.S. women's football league which is entirely built around an unbundled model, has seen strong investment with the league's 14 clubs averaging 24 sponsors per team⁵⁸ and its \$60m per season broadcasting deal the most lucrative in women's football²⁴.

In Europe, teams typically operate on a hybrid model, mostly centred around bundled partnerships combined with a few select women's only partners. Australia's men's and women's A-Leagues on the other hand are fully bundled, with both media and commercial rights across the two leagues and their clubs fully interconnected.

This varied approach to bundling across the global landscape of women's football shows that rights holders are still experimenting and learning about the ideal strategy.

The ideal strategy for unbundling will vary not just on the league, but also on the specific club, where rights holders should consider and understand the fans of their men's and women's teams, as separate groups, the overall market they operate in as well as the partners' preferences.

As domestic women's leagues continue to grow globally, SPORTFIVE expects to see more rightsholders experimenting with unbundling commercial and media rights, particularly amongst the most followed teams.

In the short-term, this is not expected to replace the need for financial contributions from the men's game, but instead lead to heightened investment and brand interest in women's teams as individual entities, providing a platform from which the sport can sustainably grow in the long-term.



JOIE STADIUM

IN 2023, MANCHESTER CITY WOMEN BECAME THE FIRST BARCLAYS WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE CLUB TO SECURE A COMMERCIAL AGREEMENT FOR ITS STADIUM NAMING RIGHTS THROUGH ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH BABY GEAR BRAND JOIE.



WHAT NEXT FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL?

THE BOTTOM LINE

'The golden thread' theory is a concept often used in organisational and management practices and describes an ever-present connection that links important actions and decisions together.

Women's football's golden thread was forever altered when women were banned from playing the sport professionally for more than 50 years.

The ban has, and will continue to, shape women's football for as long as the sport exists, because its consequences have moulded players, fans, teams and federations into a unique sport that is not just different to men's football, but different to any other sport.

And different markets around the world have taken this unique sport and developed the game in their own way.

In the U.S., women's football grew an enormous grassroots community in the 1970s, and 1980s following the implementation of Title IX (a law which prohibits sex-based discrimination in schools), and used the 1994 Olympic Games and 1999 FIFA

Women's World Cup as a platform to build the professional side of the sport²⁹.

In Europe, women's football has been developed as a byproduct of the men's game, where many of the steps forward have come through national sides. Women's football in Australia has looked to combine these two methods by trying to develop the women's game alongside the men's, but also investing in hosting a major event in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.



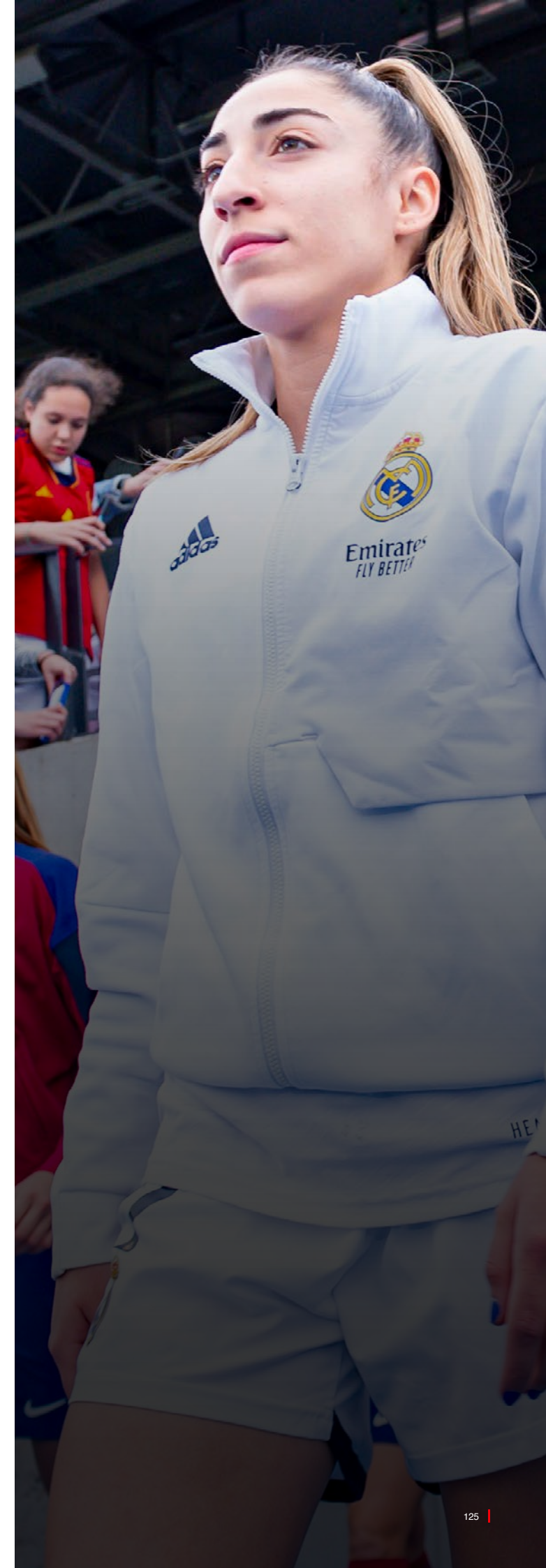
If you take the time to understand women's football as a separate product to men's football, and respect, value and invest in its unique culture, the sport will only continue to grow.

TATJANA HAENNI - CHIEF SPORTING OFFICER NWSL

Although there has been clear progress in the 50 years since women's football returned, much of this progress has been slowed down by attempts to shoe-horn the sport into the mould left behind by men's football.

Recent times have brought about a change to this narrative. Driven by the message that women's football has its own unique mould; a collective of fans, players and a select group of forward-thinking teams, federations, media platforms and brands have succeeded in delivering accelerated change in the sport.

As women's football moves into a new era, it is this collective, and their message, that has to remain at the heart for all stakeholders looking to develop the sport. Women's football will forever be different and it will only ever reach its full potential once rights holders, media platforms brands and fans accept and embrace this difference.



BEYOND » THE MATCH

The SPORTFIVE Magazine

EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S SPORT

For inspiring stories, expert insights, and in-depth analysis of women's football and the wider world of women's sport, visit SPORTFIVE's BEYOND THE MATCH magazine. Go beyond the game to celebrate the athletes, stories, and progress shaping the future of women's sport.

Visit Magazine

RECOMMENDED INSIGHTS:

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▶ Sponsorship in Women's Sport: The Growth, Reasoning & Opportunities

Read More

▶ Rewarding Sponsorships – Brands Targeting Clubs with Men's & Women's Teams

Read More

▶ The Continuing Rise of Women's Sport

Read More

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Read More

▶ Building LEGO's Unstoppable FC

Read More

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

SPORTFIVE is a global sports marketing agency that delivers customer-centric solutions based on trust, transparency, deep industry experience, global relationships, digital intelligence and innovation.

SPORTFIVE strategically and creatively connects brands, rightsholders, media platforms and fans to enable contemporary partnerships in sports. While creating and growing long-term value for all, SPORTFIVE often leads the sports business into the future through innovative digital solutions and strives to be the most progressive and respected partner in sports.

Being at the centre of professional sport, SPORTFIVE will use its unique position to make a positive contribution towards sustainability and deliver on our social and economic responsibilities, which sport and consequently all parties involved, also have.

SPORTFIVE operates with a global mindset and network of over 1,300 local experts based in 18 countries. We are active in Football, Golf, Esports, Motorsport, Handball, Tennis, American Football, Basketball, Ice Hockey, Rugby, Cricket and the Olympic Games plus many more.

GLOBAL PERSONNEL AND RESOURCE STRUCTURE

50+ NATIONALITIES WITHIN OUR NETWORK

25+ LANGUAGES SPOKEN ACROSS OUR NETWORK

OUR BUSINESS MANAGES \$1 BILLION IN GLOBAL SPONSORSHIP MARKETING SPEND ANNUALLY

EXCLUSIVE AND NON-EXCLUSIVE SALES ON BEHALF OF SOME OF THE BIGGEST RIGHTSHOLDERS IN SPORT



ADVISORY AND BROKERAGE GLOBALLY FOR A WIDE SELECTION OF BRANDS, INCLUDING:



Sponsorship is a powerful way for brands to align with movements that celebrate empowerment, inclusivity, and growth such as women's sport. At SPORTFIVE, we help you unlock these opportunities for success.

DAVID ROTHENHÄUSER, VICE PRESIDENT
GLOBAL MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

SPORTFIVE

WE ARE LEADERS IN SPORTS MARKETING

OUR AMBITION IN WOMEN'S SPORT

Women's sport.

It's come so far, in such a short space of time but this is just the beginning. A movement where athletes are advocates and become role models. Where teams defy limits, rewrite narratives, dismantle barriers. Making history.

Extraordinary women are not just playing the game they're shaping the future, challenging the status quo and inspiring generations to follow. At SPORTFIVE, we're committed to accelerating this movement and use our unstoppable global power to drive it forward with lasting impact. To make women's sport shift from moment to mainstream.

Championing equality, inclusivity and diversity. Expanding reach, coverage and amplifying platforms. Working with brands that are allies, those that want to shape the future.

Because this is more than sport. It's a revolution. It's limitless. Growing stronger, faster, and louder than ever.

JOIN US ON THE JOURNEY.

WE ARE NUMBER 1 GLOBAL AGENCY IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

5+

LEAGUES

5+

NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

\$50+

P.A. WOMEN'S SPORT REVENUE

30+

CLUBS

130

DEALS DELIVERED ACROSS WOMEN'S SPORT IN 2023

- WINNERS OF 'SUPPORTERS OF WOMEN'S SPORT' AWARDS 2023
- DELIVERY OF IMPACTFUL BRAND ACTIVATION CAMPAIGNS



WE ARE TRUSTED

To represent the world's most premium international rightsholders in Women's Sports



WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

Our expertise, unique insight and positioning in the market ensures that we are able to not only deliver great brand partnerships and activations, but also maximize commercial value for rightsholders via a carefully managed approach to categories and brands.

- WE KNOW WHAT BRANDS ARE LOOKING FOR
- WE UNDERSTAND THE MARKET DYNAMICS OF KEY CATEGORIES
- WE KNOW THE LANDSCAPE AND ECOSYSTEM OF WOMEN'S SPORT
- WE HAVE PROVEN ABILITY TO APPLY THIS TO DELIVER MAXIMUM VALUE FOR OUR RIGHTSHOLDER CLIENTS

TRULY GLOBAL
WITH LOCAL ROOTS

NEW YORK
WASHINGTON
D.C.
DALLAS
PHOENIX
RIO DE JANEIRO
HAMBURG
BERLIN
FRANKFURT
MUNICH
PARIS
MANCHESTER
LONDON
BARCELONA
BUDAPEST
LAUSANNE
RIYADH
DUBAI
SHANGHAI
SINGAPORE
HONG KONG
SEOUL
TOKYO
SYDNEY

18
COUNTRIES

60+
LOCATIONS

+1,300
EMPLOYEES WORLDWIDE

OUR SERVICES

FOR BRANDS

Sports & entertainment marketing advisory
Partnerships & hospitality solutions
Brand marketing strategy
Creative partnerships activation
Experiential marketing



FOR RIGHTSHOLDERS

Media distribution strategy
Media, sponsorship & hospitality sales
Internationalisation services
Digital fan experience solutions
Athlete management & contract management
Arena development and operations



FOR MEDIA PLATFORMS

Advisory services
Production
Content distribution
Partnership & airtime sales



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