



WHY BRANDS
SHOULD BE ELEVATING

WOMEN'S SPORTS



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Women's sports have never been more popular.

A couple of weeks ago, women's college basketball's March Madness ended with LSU defeating Iowa. The Tigers' 102-85 victory over the Hawkeyes averaged **9.9 million viewers** – a **104% increase** over last year's national championship game between South Carolina and UConn – making this year's game the most watched NCAA women's basketball game ever. Viewership for the Tigers' victory was more than last season's college football Sugar, Orange and Cotton Bowls and even beat the season average for the NFL's "Thursday Night Football" on Amazon Prime (source: [Axios Sports](#) and [NBC Sports](#)). This increase in viewership and overall interest in women's college basketball may surprise some, but it shouldn't.

Beyond women's college basketball, there's a tremendous amount of momentum around women's sports, which will undoubtedly be on full display this summer when the FIFA Women's World Cup takes place in Australia and New Zealand. According to a report from the National Research Group titled ["Future of Women's Sports: Leveling the Playing Field,"](#) three

out of 10 sports fans in the United States said they watch more women's sports now than they did five years ago. The report also found that younger generations have the fastest-growing appetite for women's sports with **39%** of Gen Z sports fans saying they are watching more women's sports now than a year ago. What's causing this shift in interest? Well, **38%** of fans said they watch more women's sports now because they see games as more entertaining and competitive than in the past. But what's most interesting about the survey results is that three of the other key drivers of increased engagement with women's sports are all about exposure: an estimated **41%** of fans say they watch it more because there are simply more women's sports being broadcast on television, **32%** said there is more press and attention around women's sports and **25%** said women's sports are being talked about more on social media.

This tells us that increasing engagement around women's sports is more of a supply-side issue – the more women's sports are covered, the more fans will watch and engage.

- ❑ Luckily, investments are being made to do just that. Fast Studios recently [launched](#) The Women's Sports Network, a dedicated 24-hour streaming service across several digital platforms. The Women's Sports Network will cover the LPGA, U.S. Ski & Snowboard, the World Surf League (WSL) and women's sports news. Plans are in the works to stream other events too. In addition to The Women's Sports Network, Just Women's Sports, a "one-stop shop for all things women's sports" has made major movement in its coverage of women's sports, including the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), WNBA, women's college sports and more through podcasts, video and even merchandise. There is also Togethxr, The Gist, espnW, On Her Turf, The Equalizer, The IX and HighlightHER – all platforms that have built strong communities by delivering unique perspectives and social-forward content specific to women's sports.

The increased interest in women's sports combined with the evolving media landscape will undoubtedly impact brands.



The background of the slide is a composite image. On the left, a soccer ball with white, black, and blue panels is shown on a green grass field. The ball has the text 'MATCH BALL REPLIC' visible. On the right, a large, dark stadium is filled with spectators, with a bright green field in the foreground. The title text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

HOW BRANDS CAN AND SHOULD
CAPITALIZE ON THE GROWING POPULARITY OF
**WOMEN'S
SPORTS**



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Lead with Women:

Especially with Name, Image, Likeness (NIL), the amount of women athletes that can be leveraged to promote and support a brand is larger than ever.

With many of these athletes wielding significant influence, brands should utilize women athletes to be front and center in marketing and communications programming – and if the [social following](#) of women's college basketball players is any indication, they shouldn't be surprised if the response is considerably more impactful than what would have been driven by a man.

Increase Access and Visibility:

Although women's sports have never been more popular, let's not forget that there's so much more that can still be done. Brands need to think about how they can help increase not only access to sports for women, but the visibility of those sports and athletes.

For example – girl's flag football has started gaining significant momentum in a few states, but the vast majority of this country lacks organized leagues. There are many brands that exist across industries that could certainly help with this, perhaps by being an investor and providing the financial support needed for the leagues to grow and thrive.

Leverage Employee Engagement Benefits:

A lot of this conversation is centered around the benefits to brands externally with target consumers, but it shouldn't be understated how much impact partnering and engaging with women's sports could have internally with employees. If an opportunity presents itself to partner with a female athlete or a women's sports property, brands should consider how they can leverage those for employee engagement purposes, whether that means inviting partners to an internal event or developing a piece of content that's designed specifically for employees.

The women's college basketball March Madness only reinforced what many already believed – the popularity of women's sports is about to explode. As this happens, however, so too will the responsibility for brands to continue to support and foster women's sports. But as big as the responsibility is, the opportunity is even bigger. Don't be left on the proverbial sideline.



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