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EXAMINING THE DRIVERS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL SPONSORSHIP.

An examination of the German football market.

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Abstract

Sports sponsorship in football is crucial in providing financial support to sports entities in return for advertising opportunities and brand exposure. However, women's football still faces challenges in terms of relevance and accessibility. This study utilizes interviews with sponsorship market experts and football fans to explore the potential benefits and challenges of sponsorships in women's football in Germany, and effective ways for firms to leverage them. Analysis categorizes statements into investment benefits, effective utilization, challenges, and fan perceptions. Results suggest investing in women's football can yield positive attributes and achieve marketing objectives on a lower budget. The study highlights the growing market of women's football in Germany and calls for further research in this area.

Keywords

Sports sponsorship, Sponsorship awareness, Sports marketing, Sponsorship objectives, Women's football

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1 Introduction

Sponsorship is crucial in the football industry, offering financial support and visibility to clubs, players, and events in exchange for advertising opportunities and brand exposure (Henseler, Wilson and Westberg 2011; Marwitz 2006). At the same time, it is an opportunity to reach a large audience and connect with consumers while establishing a positioning strategy (Meenaghan 2001; Kropp, Lavack and Holden 1999). Approximately 70% of the projected \$60.2 billion global sponsorship investments in 2016 were directed toward sports properties (International Events Group 2016). Unlike other types of sponsorship, in the arts for example, sports sponsorships not only target properties that offer the best ROI but also help generate significant revenue for teams and leagues (Biscaia 2017). While investing in football provides unique challenges and opportunities, men's football has traditionally dominated the industry (Morgan 2019). In recent years, women's football has gained importance and with it the attention of the media, as most recently seen with the Women's European Cup 2022 (UEFA 2022). However, women's football remains significantly minimal attentional despite the growing commercialization and professionalization (Vigers 2021; Thomson et al. 2022; Valenti, Scelles and Morrow 2018), highlighting the need to examine the drivers and leverage of sponsorship in women's football to maximize the effectiveness of those sponsorships.

2 Research Questions

RQ1: What are the potential benefits as well as drivers for firms investing in sponsorship of women's football, aside from brand exposure?

RQ2: How can firms effectively leverage their investment in women's football sponsorship to achieve their business goals?

RQ3: What are the challenges of sponsorships in women's football?

RQ4: What are consumers' attitudes towards corporate sponsorships in women's football?

3 Literature Review

Within the following section, a definition of sports sponsorship, especially in football, is given and the drivers for firms to invest in this type of sponsorship are examined.

3.1 Sponsorship

In recent decades, sponsorship has gained popularity and become an important part of the business (Henseler, Wilson and Westberg 2011). It was initially used in the US and UK as a marketing tactic that was considered to be surreptitious or sports advertising at the time. It has since solidified and become a significant element of marketing strategies (Marwitz 2006), which, unlike philanthropy and donations, are contractual (Adjouri and Stastny 2007). It is crucial for building a positive corporate image and promoting engagement with various stakeholders such as competitors, authorities, suppliers, banks and the public. To achieve this goal, firms often use sponsorship in unrelated areas (Abratt, Clayton and Pitt 1987). Besides, it can have a greater impact on consumers compared to traditional advertising, especially when it is related to their interests, as the message is conveyed through a passion-based approach (Meenaghan and O'Sullivan 2001; Cornwell 2019). Sponsorship involves two main activities: Payment to the sponsee and association of the sponsored activity with the sponsor's marketing benefit. Both are necessary to generate significant revenue (Cornwell and Maignan 1998). Nowadays, firms prefer long-term strategic partnerships to short-term ones (Woisetschläger, Backhaus and Cornwell 2017) and use sponsorship to gain wider exposure and differentiate themselves from competitors (Fahy, Farrelly and Quester 2004; Cornwell 2008). According to Meenaghan (1983), sponsorship is a non-verbal medium, whereas advertising uses visual cues, music, and context. It offers a more non-commercial approach for firms to engage with their (potential) customers by creating a link between the sponsor, the team and the fans, which offers advantages over traditional advertising that offers no benefits to fans (Cornwell 2019). Furthermore, sponsorship often does not activate consumers' persuasive knowledge (Friestad and Wright 1994). However,

firms should be cautious as excessive sponsorship can activate consumers' persuasive knowledge and thus lead to negative conclusions perceived as opportunistic (Carrillat, D'Astous and Colbert 2008).

3.2 Sports Sponsorship

Since the 1980s, firms have been able to capitalize on the emotional attachment of sports fans to teams and athletes, as well as the enthusiasm generated by sports, through this marketing opportunity (Morgan 2019). Various sports sponsorships exist (Figure 1) and are a vital part of marketing (Abratt, Clayton and Pitt 1987). In contrast to other sponsorships, they are considered as strategic business partnerships, such as co-marketing or strategic alliances (Dolphin 2003; Morgan et al. 2014), and often display corporate logos in sports-related locations and league websites (Chadwick and Thwaites 2004; Walliser 2003). By supporting sports events, teams, or athletes, sports sponsorship is a preferred method as it provides flexibility, extensive audience reach, and increased brand visibility (Meenaghan 2001; Kropp, Lavack, and Holden 1999). One of the main aspects of sponsorships in sports is the opportunity to build on the emotional connections shared between fans and sports properties (Woisetschläger, Backhaus and Cornwell 2017). Yang et al. (2008) state that sports organizations receive financial support to aid the achievement of sporting goals, while sponsors gain both tangible and intangible benefits from being associated with the team to attract consumers. Thus, it benefits both the sponsor and the sponsored (Schubert and Walzel 2018). To reach consumers during sponsorship activation and support marketing endeavors, new media such as social media plays a vital role (Santomier 2008). While usually sponsors prioritize investments in properties that offer high returns, sports sponsorships can also generate significant revenue for teams and leagues. As sponsorship funds continue to grow, sports entities need to prove to sponsors that their investment is valuable (Biscaia et al. 2017). Collaboration between football teams and sponsors such as providing excellent service and showcasing sponsorship value to fans can result in mutual

benefits and long-term success (Biscaia et al. 2017). Furthermore, emotional bonds are critical for maximizing the potential of sports sponsorships (Schönberner and Woratschek 2020, Santomier 2008). As sports sponsorship is aligned with consumers' interests (Meenaghan and O'Sullivan 2001; Cornwell 2019) and unintentionally reaches consumers during the match, it can effectively influence them (Harshaw and Turner 1999). The positive feelings of fans about the team-sponsor relationship are transferred to the sponsor's brand (Madrigal 2001), and particularly the loyal fans of the sports entity support the sponsors and tend to buy their products (Kaynak et al. 2008). Beyond that, sports sponsorship enables firms to reach two potential markets: participants and spectators (Abratt, Clayton and Pitt 1987). It enables an international presence by creating links to different markets across national borders (Lagae 2005) and by overcoming cultural and language barriers (Santomier 2008; Amis and Cornwall 2006). As sport is inherently competitive and exciting (Abratt, Clayton and Pitt 1987), it is a remarkable and diverse activity to reach a wide audience (Lardinoit and Derbaix 2001). Furthermore, a study by Nielsen Sports (2022) found that consumers perceive brand sponsorship of sporting events as the third most trusted marketing channel. As one of the most popular sports, attracting fans from all over the world (Naidenova, Parshakov and Chmykhov 2016), football has become an important marketing tool for firms and a significant source of revenue for professional sports teams (Böhler, Heffernan and Hewson 2007). Despite the considerable revenues, clubs still rely heavily on sponsorship. Typically, these sponsorships involve the purchase of a space in the stadium where the firm's logo is visible to thousands of fans (Naidenova, Parshakov and Chmykhov 2016). The opportunity to display a firm's name or symbol on the team's shirt is an important and successful incentive for football sponsorship (Chadwick and Thwaites 2004; Biscaia et al. 2014). Sponsorship deals can also include stadium naming rights, matchday advertising, logos and visibility on club literature and corporate hospitality facilities (Chen and Zhang 2011; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004). Research shows that sponsorship is more akin to an act

of charity than a commercial investment (Naidenova, Parshakov and Chmykhov 2016), resulting in increased likeability among consumers (Meenaghan 2001).

3.3 Factors affecting the outcome of Sports Sponsorship

Before deciding on sports sponsorship, the factors that influence firms' decisions on whether to invest in sports need to be considered. This section examines various factors influencing sports sponsorship by discussing the sponsors' and sponsees' objectives and examining the driving factors.

3.3.1 Sponsors' Objectives

Sponsorship awareness is an essential initial metric for evaluating the effectiveness of sponsorship, as it serves as a prerequisite for further processing (Johar, Pham and Wakefield 2006; Wakefield, Becker-Olsen and Cornwell 2007). To understand sponsorship awareness, it is important to define brand awareness, which is the ability to identify (recall and recognition) a brand in different circumstances (Keller 1993). While sponsor awareness is an important first step in stimulating fan reactions that can lead to purchase intentions and actual purchases (Madrigal 2001), it is not the only factor influencing consumers' decisions (KO et al. 2008). Nevertheless, sponsorship and repeated exposure reinforce the association between the product and the sport in consumers' minds (KO et al. 2008; Yang et al. 2008). In addition, individuals with more knowledge about sports tend to process more sponsorship information (Wakefield and Bennet 2010). However, awareness of sponsorship is not always guaranteed as people find it difficult to distinguish official sponsors (Johar, Pham and Wakefield 2006), but regular disclosure of sponsorship links increases recognition (Meenaghan 2001). Furthermore, awareness of sponsorship is binary - either present or absent, and it is important to note that there are no different levels of awareness. Thus, greater awareness does not lead to a more positive perception of the sponsor. Without awareness at all, fans can neither evaluate the fit between the team and sponsor nor develop an attitude towards the sponsor (Biscaia et al. 2017). Sponsorship

awareness tends to be higher among fans who regularly attend the team or event (Biscaia 2013). Therefore, sponsorship awareness in professional sports is the familiarity of fans with sponsors expressed through accurate recall and recognition (Biscaia et al. 2017).

Understanding the drivers of sports sponsorship can assist firms in making informed decisions and using sponsorship to strengthen their brand (Cornwell 2019). Sports sponsorship focuses on supporting a specific entity rather than selling products (Meenaghan 2001). In addition, professional sports sponsorship is effective in meeting commercial objectives due to the broad audience and media exposure (Vance et al. 2016), while cause-related sponsorship is more associated with community service objectives (Quester and Thompson 2001). Schönberger and Woratschek (2020) divided sports sponsorship objectives into five different categories: corporate, marketing, media, relationship building and personal objectives (Figure 2) including various objectives such as increasing sales, enhancing goodwill, improving brand image and attracting management interest (Hoek, Gendall and Stockdale 1993). According to recent studies, corporate objectives such as increasing brand awareness, image, and reputation take priority followed by marketing objectives (Hartland, Skinner and Griffiths 2005). Smaller rural firms view sponsorship primarily as a way to support and build relationships with their local community (Mount and Niro 1995). Apart from commercial or altruistic motives, sponsors are increasingly motivated by social identity and tribal affiliation (Garrym, Broderick and Lahiffe 2008). However, commercial and community goals can overlap, and sponsors often pursue multiple brand and corporate goals through sponsorship (Cornwell, Roy and Steinard 2001).

3.3.2 Sponsees' Objectives

Besides the sponsor, also the sponsored entity influences the outcomes of sponsorship (Morgan et al. 2014). Hence, their objectives also need to be discussed. The sponsored entities earn monetary support from sponsorships needed to improve team quality or other managerial aspects (Naidenova, Parshakov and Chmykhov 2016). Club managers should consider

sponsorship not only as a source of revenue but also as a means of disseminating messages to fans and stakeholders, as the characteristics of sponsorship have implications for the sponsored object (Woisetschläger, Backhaus and Cornwell 2017). Thus, in some cases, not only financial support is involved, but also in-kind support such as assistance in management decisions or expertise (Chen and Zhang 2011). Beyond that, the sports entity also benefits from market presence and brand-related advantages (Morgan et al. 2014). Even though most clubs generate money from broadcasts, ticket sales, and fan merchandise, sponsorship is still needed (Naidenova, Parshakov and Chmykhov 2016). The sponsored entities must demonstrate the importance of a corporate sponsor for further sporting success (Biscaia et al. 2013) and establish a productive B2B relationship with their sponsor (Davies, Daellenbach and Ashill 2008).

4 The Rise of Women's Football

The history of women's football began earlier than many think: the first game took place in 1881, and the first club was founded in 1887. Despite adverse economic conditions, paying attendance increased rapidly between 1917 and 1920 (Williams and Hess 2015). According to Williams (2007) women's football has gone through three historical phases: struggle for social acceptance, legalization and popularity, and acceptance into the global sport. Women's football suffered during Phase I when the Football Association banned it in 1920, as it was considered as dangerous for women reshaping it as a masculine sport (Skovang 2019, Williams and Hess 2015). After the FA reinstated women's football in 1971, the fight for equality resumed in Phase II (Berri 2022; Lavery 2022; Skovang 2019). As professional leagues become more integrated and accepted, women's football has gained more opportunities (Taylor et al. 2020). Professionalization of the sport has increased its appeal and competitiveness, resulting in increased demand (Schallhorn, Knoll and Schramm 2017). Over the last 30 years, the number of girls and women playing grassroots football in European countries has increased (UEFA 2017), though only a few countries have received significant media attention, including England, France,

Germany, and Sweden (Valenti, Scelles and Morrow 2018). Since national federations are trying to turn their leagues into full-time professional leagues, women's football is undergoing a transition (Valenti, Scelles and Morrow 2018), but faces challenges such as financial viability, organizational difficulties, and low interest from fans, media, and sponsors, despite efforts from international governing bodies (ECA 2014; Welford 2018). Society's view of women's football is changing as women take on increasingly important roles, but the business and media sectors have yet to catch up (Morgan 2019; Burton 2015). Still, it has made progress both on and off the pitch, with the unbundling of sponsorship rights from men's competitions and the willingness of partners to engage in the process being possible factors in this growth (UEFA 2019).

4.1 How is it today?

Nowadays, many football clubs are emerging integrated women's teams leading to shared resources and expertise, but doing so may also lead to financial dependence and comparisons to men's teams (Welford 2013). While integrating women's teams may result in lower fan acceptance and attendance (Meier, Konjer and Leinwather 2016), it may also raise awareness and interest in women's football (Valenti, Scelles and Morrow 2018). Furthermore, there is a well-known wage disparity: for example, in the UK, the highest-paid women in the FA Women's Super League are paid less than 10% of the average English Premier League player (Berri 2022). Women's teams, despite comparable attendance, wages, and higher revenue in some cases, such as in the US, have not received sufficient financial investment, due to inadequate media coverage, sponsorships, and government funding (Berri 2022; Valenti, Scelles and Morrow 2018). The challenge is to strike a balance between the sameness (being part of the professional sport) and difference (liberal feminist projects) strategies for legitimacy. While using unique values of women's football to differ from men's can be misinterpreted as inferiority, similarity to men's football can demonstrate worth (Allison 2016). Allison (2016) suggests that rather than matching the ROI of men's football, the goal for women's football should be to

inspire girls through professionalization. For further development, national and international tournaments are critical for the development and recruitment of female football players (Skogvang 2019). Social media, a key tool for promoting women's football due to its ubiquitous presence in sports coverage, can significantly enhance the development of women's football (Vann 2014). As one of the most impressive examples, in 2021, a new TV agreement made it easier to watch the Women's Super League in the UK, leading to a 542% increase in viewership (Nielsen 2022). Despite increasing popularity and greater commercial potential, women's football is still less sponsored than men's football. This creates untapped potential and new business opportunities for rights holders, media, and brands in women's football (Morgan 2019).

4.2 Recent major Women's Football Events

The 2022 European Women's Football Cup was the most-watched event in history globally, both on TV and streaming. 50 million globally watched the Women's EURO final, with 453.3 million social interactions worldwide and 14.6 million interactions and 185.9 million video views globally, three times more than in 2017. UK and Germany had the highest viewership since UEFA EURO 2020 (UEFA 2022). In Germany, the Women's Final attracted even more viewers (17.89 million) than the highest audience for the men's matches at the 2022 World Cup (17.44 million) (ZDF 2022; Quotenmeter 2022). The final reached a new record for a women's or men's European Cup final with 87,192 spectators (UEFA 2022). The Champions League, first held in the 2001/02 season and in its ninth season adopting the existing men's Champions League name to overcome initial concerns that only amateur clubs could participate, has since grown in popularity (UEFA 2022a; Valenti, Scelles and Morrow 2018). Besides, on 22 April 2022, the attendance record for a women's football match was broken: 91,648 fans watched the Champions League semi-final between FC Barcelona and VfL Wolfsburg (Byers 2022), indicating the positive impact of significant investment and support for women's teams (Berri 2022).

4.3 Awareness of Women's Football

Football is a popular sport worldwide, with women's football teams in some cases having emerged independently of men's football, while in other cases women's football teams are often an extension of men's football (Valenti, Scelles and Morrow 2018). However, the growing interest in women's football is highlighted by recent events such as EURO 2022 and the record attendance in Barcelona (Doyle et al. 2021).

4.3.1 Sports Sponsorships in Women's Football

Comparing women's football with men's football can be detrimental to the former (Lavielle n.d.). According to Shaw and Amis (2001), sponsorship decisions are influenced by the values and beliefs of decision-makers, media portrayal, and management pressure. In the early 2000s, sponsors recognized women as a new market that favored image messages over sales messages (Branch 1995; Lough 1996). Additionally, sponsors used female athletes as brand ambassadors and attracted women-focused brands, leading to new trends such as targeted sales efforts and sponsorship of women's competitions (Morgen 2019). Despite limited media coverage and perceptions that differ from men's football, women's football has distinct brand associations that prioritize diversity, role models, and new opportunities (Doyle et al. 2021). Women's sport is not as well funded as men's sport, as evidenced by Forbes' list of the highest-paid athletes in 2022 (Knight n.d.), but professionalism has improved, and women are becoming more visible in a variety of sport-related roles (Antunovic and Linden 2015; Morgan 2019). As sports sponsorship can reach larger audiences than ever before, women's football must be recognized as a valuable commercial opportunity (WARC n.d.) as it offers unique untapped potential and growing audiences. In addition, engagement should encourage firms to invest more in sports sponsorship (Lavielle n.d.). However, due to bundling with men's rights, women's football has not had the opportunity to develop as successfully as it could. Nevertheless, investing in women's football could lead to increased spectator numbers and contribute to its growth (Vigers 2021).

4.3.2 Reasons against and for investing in Women's Football

Women's football continues to face challenges such as under-representation in leadership positions (Burton 2015), limited training opportunities (Gomez-Gonzalez, Dietl and Nesslerer 2019), insufficient media coverage (Musto et al. 2017), low investment, and difficulties in attracting sponsors (Valenti, Scelles and Morrow 2020; Morgan 2019), which hinder further development (Lee and Ross 2012; Thomson et al. 2022). Although women's football attracts record audiences, biases in perceptions of quality and potential have led to a lag behind men's football, limiting further investment. Investors tend to focus on past performance in women's football rather than investing in its potential, as is the case in men's football (Berri 2022). Furthermore, the nature of the sporting activity influences media coverage. As football is considered a 'male' team sport, the media focuses on irrelevant information about women's football, such as personal life or appearance (Crossman, Vincent and Speed 2007). But fortunately, this has changed since the 2015 Women's World Cup (Petty and Pope 2019). Women's football has a larger sponsorship gap than men's football due to lower sponsorship spending, public support, and statistical data. For example, the Women's Champions League has a broadcast budget of only \$8 million, while the English Premier League has contracts worth more than \$5 billion, widening the disparity (Berri 2022).

Concerning the reasons for investing in women's football, it expresses a sense of bodily ownership, strength, and control that traditional feminine ideals and sports simply cannot provide (Williams and Hess 2015). According to a recent study by the Collective Tank and the University of St Gallen, 88% of fans would watch more women's football if it were televised, indicating a strong interest in the sport (Lavielle n.d.). This has already been confirmed at EURO 2022 with record viewing figures (UEFA 2022). As women's football is associated with positive social change (Morgen and Taylor 2017), inclusive fan cultures (Guest and Luijten 2018) and female role models (Allison 2016), firms benefit from investing in women's football in more

than just financial terms (Morgan 2019). Firms aiming to improve their image and visibility can therefore benefit from investing in women's football (Lough and Irwin 2001). While football fans have always been interested in watching good football, there has been a recent increase in interest in promoting women (Guest and Luijten 2017). Women's football tournaments such as the World or European Cup have high attendances, which could be due to people's strong national identification that transcends gender and indicates a gender-neutral interest (Wensing and Bruce 2003). In addition, some firms may not have the opportunity to advertise on the shirt of a men's team but can do so on the front of a women's team shirt of the same club, as the price is lower in women's football. This allows firms to achieve their marketing objectives with a lower budget (Kidd 2018). However, to be successful in the growing women's football market, sports managers must first understand their customers (Funk, Ridinger and Moorman 2003).

5 Method

The study aims to identify the driving factors for sponsorship in women's football to aid sports organizations and sponsors. To answer the research questions of this thesis, experts in football sponsorship on the one hand, and football fans on the other hand are interviewed in detail. The use of qualitative research methods was chosen as this research aims to gain insights into people's experiences, values, and perspectives (Inglis 1992). Besides, qualitative research flexibility is necessary when questions are complex and difficult to answer (McCracken 1988), such as in the case of sponsorship in women's football, where information is scarce (Vigers 2021). Hence, it is important to obtain more in-depth information, only achievable through interviews (Walle 2015). In this work, a semi-structured interview with predefined open-ended questions is used as it allows the respondent to answer in a personal way while giving the interviewer more control over the information gathered during the interview (Drever 1995; Walle 2015). Specific prior knowledge is required to control the interview and gather the necessary

information for this research. In addition, ensuring subtle control is crucial to maintaining a conversational tone and making respondents feel comfortable (Walle 2015).

5.1 Participants and Procedure

To find suitable experts, the concept of establishing inclusion criteria is used. The experts must have at least three years of experience in the sports industry, preferably in sports sponsorship, and be active in the German market, as this study focuses exclusively on this market. The second group to be interviewed are fans who watch football regularly. Regularly implies at least watching football once a week, either men's or women's football. These two groups are chosen to gain a deeper insight into two different but very important groups of the sponsorship circle. Managers can guide managerial decisions from a business perspective, while fans can provide insight about what firms should consider in sponsorships to meet the needs of their customers. Respondents need to be selected in a homogeneous group that has crucial commonalities with the research questions to achieve a common understanding (McCracken 1988; Walle 2015). The sampling method was deliberately chosen to increase the depth and richness of data for the research questions through an iterative process (Kuzel 1999). Interviewees are contacted via platforms such as LinkedIn and are interviewed via online platforms in order to overcome the geographical barrier (Deakin and Wakefield 2014) and allow the interviewee to be interviewed where they feel comfortable sharing the information. The sample size of ten experts and ten fans is determined by data saturation, which occurs when no new information is needed to reach a fundamental understanding and generalization of the information gathered is possible (Guest, Bunce and Johnson 2006). Interviews last 10 to 30 minutes, depending on how much information participants are willing to provide. A summary and review of the interview statements at the end of the interviews ensures communicative validation (Flick 2018).

5.2 Materials and Analysis

An interview guide is created to guide the research by using previous literature on the research topic to develop accurate questions. The semi-structured interview approach is used to capture specific experiences, allowing for deviations from the guide (McCracken 1988). The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. The analysis material included 21 pages of transcripts and 225 minutes of expert interviews, as well as 17 pages of transcripts and 131 minutes of fan interviews. An iterative approach was chosen for data analysis. Repeated reading of the interviews ensures familiarity with the data and enables the manual creation of a coding scheme to sort and analyze the results of the interviews. The main categories identified are based on the research questions of this study with the corresponding sub-themes for a more detailed analysis and classification of the results.

5.3 Interview Guide Experts and Fans

To begin with, both groups of respondents are informed about the research topic to facilitate their participation. Questions are asked specifically to ensure shared experiences between the relatively homogeneous groups (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Both groups are asked background questions followed by specific questions to explore the research topic in more depth. The expert interviews focus on professional experiences (Figure 3), while the fan interviews focus on personal perceptions of sponsorship in football (Figure 4). The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of sponsorship from both the corporate and the fan perspective. Digressions during the interview are permitted as they can provide insightful information and match the interests and expertise of the interviewee (Johnson 2001). To avoid discomfort, the order of questions is carefully planned, with sensitive questions asked at the end. Interruptions of the informants are avoided so as not to disturb their thought processes (Walle 2015).

6 Findings

For a better understanding of the results from the interviews, the responses from both groups are divided into different categories, which are presented below.

6.1 Experts

Unfortunately, gender equality among experts is not achieved as it is a male domain and thus more difficult to achieve. People from various firms such as sponsorships agencies, firms that sponsor and football clubs are interviewed to gain a better insight into sponsorships of women. Figure 7 provides some examples of the responses for each category to give a brief overview. Taking all the results of the statements together, authenticity, untapped market, and poor accessibility seem to be the most important aspects for experts, as these were most frequently mentioned.

6.1.1 Benefits and Drivers for Firms Investing in Women's Football (RQ1)

Authenticity, sympathy, and positive image transfer.

With women's football, one of the striking factors is that it is perceived as authentic, sympathetic, and familiar, thus enabling a positive image transfer for firms. Furthermore, firms benefit from being perceived as diverse and progressive by incorporating socially responsible issues into their sponsorship. By doing so, they could also benefit in terms of their employer branding.

"Women are communicative, creative and you can engage them in a hugely positive way." (E3)

"You broadcast quality, you support a women's team, you can do employer branding and show yourself as diverse. In this way, firms can perhaps stand out a little from other classic male firms in terms of values and be very modern." (E4)

Unexploited potential market growth.

A further issue raised by many experts is that women's football, unlike men's football today, is still an untapped and rapidly growing market. Being a pioneer creates authenticity and popularity among fans and the football industry itself and is economically attractive.

"In summary, there is a large market in women's football that still has growth potential, while men's football is already very saturated from an economic perspective." (E2)

“People have realized that there is still a lot of growth, a lot of opportunities in the women's sector, and this increased visibility now simply offers a lot of attractiveness for sponsors to get involved.” (E8)

Lower price as consideration for women's sponsorships.

The price of sponsorship is one criterion for several firms to consider getting involved in women's football. Compared to men's football, the sponsorship packages are much cheaper, allowing one to be the main sponsor of the women's jersey, for example, while on the men's team one might only be present as the tenth co-sponsor on the sleeve. The audience may be smaller in women's football, but the presence and relevance as a main sponsor are much higher.

“That is perhaps also the cheapest and most favorable entry hurdle to get the logo and at the same time to have a socially relevant point of reference.” (E4)

“Of course, you have a smaller target group or a smaller audience, but you are much more present for less budget.” (E7)

Enhanced quality increases attractiveness.

The increasing quality seen in recent years is a significant reason why women's football is becoming more and more attractive to fans and thus also to firms. Ultimately, football, whether women's or men's, thrives on quality and attractiveness. This can be enhanced through increased attention and sponsorships.

“The conditions have just become incredibly professional compared to a few years ago, and of course, that is reflected in the quality of the match, which has improved significantly.” (E5)

“I also believe that the sport itself has become much more attractive, purely in terms of football.” (E7)

“That's not the case at all anymore, women's football is becoming more and more athletic. If you compare the quality of today with 10-15 years ago, you see that it's a world apart!” (E10)

6.1.2 Effective leveraging Sponsorships in Women's Football (RQ2)

Build long-term partnerships.

However, once the decision is made that firms want to invest in women's football, firms should ensure to have a long-term investment in women's football to support women from scratch. Short-term partnerships may not achieve positive effects and do not help to fundamentally advance women's football. Furthermore, they are not perceived as authentic and would not create loyalty between the firm and football fans.

“For example, if you want to sponsor the German women's national team as a flagship, you can't just do it at the event, you must do it years before and after.” (E1)

“If you're there as a sponsor from the beginning, you have such loyalty and you're so authentically and credibly connected to the community that it makes sense.” (E4)

Regionality as a criterion for sponsorships.

Besides building long-term partnerships, regionality is also relevant in terms of successful sponsorship. Large, regional firms would be a great fit to support their closest women's football team, as this exudes positive and authentic partnerships. Thereby, firms should not only be concerned about the financial aspect but also about the personal match.

“Large regional firms that are based in the cities, that deal with the topic and can perhaps approach it differently than firms that only book media services. It should be a strategic partnership.” (E7)

“It is not only about the financial aspect but also about the personal match.” (E8)

6.1.3 Challenges of Sponsorships in Women's Football (RQ3)

Biases and Prejudices among sponsors.

Even today, women's football still faces numerous obstacles and challenges, mainly caused by many prejudices and biases. These consist of a low return on investment or women's football being perceived as inferior in quality. Consequently, certain firms still see an investment as a high risk, despite women's football is a growing and potential market.

“Sadly, many prejudices still exist, such as bad return on investment and women don't play good football, but that's an outdated way of thinking. Another issue is that many people still don't know what a high level of football is played there. They still have the outdated opinion that women's football doesn't have a high level, which in fact it has today.” (E2)

Bad accessibility as a barrier to further investment.

Apart from the prejudices in women's football, it also struggles with poor accessibility. In Germany, the women's football league is only broadcast on streaming platforms, being the first barrier, and additionally only on smaller platforms, which tend to be niche, making it even more challenging to access and consume women's football. To attract long-term interest, women's football needs to be more accessible to the majority.

“If you want to develop women's football in Germany, you need more coverage permanently.” (E1) “The essential is simply visibility. Women's football can only grow if it's visible, i.e., if it's present in the media. It is not yet at the point where it needs to be.” (E6)

“Without media presence, there's a problem. People must be allowed to see things first, to get interested.” (E9)

Unappealing effect of low professionalism level.

Professionalism is another crucial element in women's football. In Germany, such professionalism is still a long way off, as women often must work or study besides playing football. The infrastructures are still far from being as professional as in England or France, for example. This is where corporate sponsorships become important to increase this professionalism.

"If women can play professional football, the quality of women's football would also increase in the long term." (E2)

"Every club should create the sporting conditions so that women don't have to have a second job alongside football. You must create the conditions that make the sport more attractive and at the same time create the same structures that exist in the men's Bundesliga." (E7)

6.2 Fans

The interview group of fans is fairly balanced in terms of gender. Five women and five men are interviewed to gain a better insight into their perception of sponsorship in women's football. For a brief overview of their perceptions, Figure 8 provides some examples of the responses in each category. Looking at all statement results collectively, sponsorship for development, prejudices, poor accessibility and perceived positivity appears to be the most important aspects for fans concerning the frequency of statements.

6.2.1 Potential Benefits in Women's Football (RQ1)

Perceived positivity by fans.

One reason why many fans support, and watch women's football is that the values it conveys are appealing to them. Women's football is much more familiar and still offers real and great stories, which young girls but also boys take as role models. The players are more approachable and engage themselves in a wide range of activities.

"And precisely because of the upswing and the immensely positive image in women's football - there are no riots, there are many peaceful family celebrations, there is a completely different atmosphere." (F5)

"I think many have the feeling that men's football is only about money and wealth, while women's football is still about real values." (F2)

Enhanced quality increasing attractiveness.

However, in recent years, fans have recognized a higher quality of women's football, leading to greater interest. Just a few years ago, it was considered boring by many as it was not comparable to men's football in terms of speed and physicality.

“Today it's completely different, not only the World or European Cup at international level with the national teams. But also, the Champions League and the Bundesliga have gained enormously in quality and that's why it's really fun to watch now.” (F3)

6.2.2 Challenges of Sponsorships in Women's Football (RQ3)

Bad accessibility as a barrier to watching it.

Poor accessibility is certainly a reason for many fans finding it difficult to regularly watch women's football. Either the times of the matches do not fit, not being broadcast in prime time, or the matches are not shown on common streaming platforms or free TV. For instance, the German Bundesliga is only broadcast on Magenta TV, a platform that not many football fans have and would not subscribe to just watch it.

“If you look for it, you'll find it, but if you want to reach people fundamentally, it simply has to be more accessible.” (F5)

“But at the moment I definitely see limitations in terms of audience, and maybe that's because of access to viewing via streams.” (F6)

Growing interest in women's football among fans.

Fans' interest in women's football increases with its attractiveness. If the quality is high, fans are eager and delighted to watch women's football as well, which was particularly the case during the last European Cup, in which the German team reached the final. Major matches of high quality, such as international tournaments including the Champions League or the World and European Cup, have greater attention than the German Bundesliga. The reason for this is that the German national league has not yet been fully professionalized and consequently its quality is not at a high level yet making it less attractive among fans.

“However, you also must find people who are interested in it. You can shake people up a bit, but it's difficult to keep the interest high if it doesn't arouse such a high interest.” (F5)

“And with men's football, I still have a lot of this fan idea behind it, which I don't have with women's football. With women's football, it's more like watching objectively, without really getting excited.” (F2)

Prejudices still influencing the fans.

Nevertheless, fans also noticed that women's football nowadays still has to cope with several challenges. Prejudices that women's football is not attractive enough have still been confirmed by some of the fans, leaving women's football with major challenges. Low professionalism is a crucial factor that is perceived by fans as a lack of attractiveness.

“It's not meant to sound stupid, but I still find men's football more attractive than women's football, just in terms of speed and physicality. Besides that, I think one challenge is that this professionalism is not yet given and perhaps does not yet have the huge acceptance in society.” (F2)

6.2.3 Consumers' positive Attitude towards Corporate Sponsorships (RQ4)

Sponsorships for further development.

Increased investment through sponsors is perceived as helpful and desired for the further development of women's football in terms of professionalization, attractiveness, and infrastructure. However, fans do not want women's football to become overly commercialized, as is already the case with men's football.

“If there are more sponsors, then maybe also smaller clubs have the chance to set themselves up more professionally.” (F2)

“This improves the quality of the league in every way. Whether it's player development or investment in facilities, which in turn benefits the teams, platforms, and service providers interested in showcasing the sport.” (F6)

Average recognition of sponsorships among fans.

As far as the recognition of sponsors is concerned, this is perceived quite differently in the responses. While some fans recognize sponsorships, others do not. However, a common factor among all is that they tend to recognize a main sponsor, for instance, the jersey sponsor, rather than smaller co-sponsors.

“Personally, the sponsors rather rush past you and therefore I do not perceive them strongly.” (F5)

“I have often noticed, especially with the jerseys, that the main sponsors are more noticeable.” (F7)

Major, German firms as sponsors.

Even though barely any fans have been influenced to purchase products through sponsorship, they perceive them positively and wish that large German firms in particular would invest more in women's football to develop it further. While the majority tend to prefer unisex firms as the

fans in women's football are mixed, however, some fans argue that more female-focused brands should invest.

“That's where I can't understand why smaller regional brands aren't also more attentive to women's football since you could incorporate so many different things.” (F5)

“Probably women-oriented companies would make more sense, but I wouldn't focus only on them, but rather on unisex firms.” (F6)

“I would definitely say unisex, because I don't think women's football should be a football for women, with only women's products in the marketing.” (F3)

7 Discussion

This research aims to determine the factors relevant to sponsorship in women's football to aid both the sponsors and the sports entities. The most relevant aspects for firms considering sponsorship in women's football include ensuring that their sponsorship contracts are long-term and regional and contributing to the professionalization of the sport by investing in it. This professionalization enhances the quality, attractiveness, and visibility of the sport, and thus its relevance. As women's football is not yet a saturated market, firms can invest in it with a lower budget and still achieve presence, prestige and relevance. Challenges observed during the interviews, but also in existing literature, such as prejudices and poor accessibility, need to be overcome through these sponsorships since women's football represents great and unique values that transfer to the firm's image.

7.1 Drivers of Sponsorships in Women's Football

As Woisetschläger, Backhaus and Cornwell (2017) already stated and the interviews in this research also revealed, sponsorships should be long-term to ensure success and authenticity. In sports sponsorship, firms already benefit from unique selling points and values (Schubert and Walzel 2018), which is even more the case in women's football, as it is associated with sympathy and authenticity through diversity, role models, and highlighting new opportunities (Doyle et al. 2021). Sponsorship allows the sponsored party to achieve sporting goals (Schubert and Walzel 2018) and women's football relies on these funds to increase professionalism, awareness and attendance, leading to increased demand (Schallhorn, Knoll and Schramm 2017). As recent

studies have shown that firms' objectives such as increasing brand awareness and positive image transfer are priorities, firms investing in women's football could benefit as the positive values of women's football transfer to the firm (Hartland, Skinner and Griffiths 2005). Additionally, firms can reach new audiences and increase their economic goals by investing in a growing market (Cornwell, Roy and Steinar 2001). Despite the potential benefits, firms should be aware of the challenges that sponsorship in women's football faces. As ECA (2014) and Welford (2018) indicate, women's football faces poor accessibility and consequent low relevance and financial viability. Experts also point out that under-representation in leadership positions is a major factor in the challenges faced by women's football. Prejudices about the poor quality of women's football are also frequently cited by experts, underpinning the claim that this limits further investment (Berri 2022). As former examples of broadcasting women's football on free TV in England have led to great success (Nielsen 2022), experts would like the German media broadcasters to follow this approach. Fortunately, the Women's Bundesliga will be broadcasted in the 2023/24 season by DAZN, a popular streaming platform, indicating further success and growth. Further aspects playing an important role in sports sponsorship are the objectives of the sponsees, as it helps them to evolve and thus become more attractive. Besides, women's football offers the opportunity to create role models for younger girls, as they often lack real role models due to low visibility. Having role models facilitates the recruitment of women into football and thus professionalization can increase.

7.2 Differences and Similarities between Experts and Fans

As experts and fans are interviewed in this research to provide more precise recommendations for managerial decisions, the similarities, and differences between the two groups must be mentioned as well. Regarding the benefits, such as the transfer of positive attributes through women's football, and the challenges, such as the poor accessibility, the opinions of both groups are almost identical. In terms of which firms should sponsor women's football, both groups

believe that large German firms should get involved, possibly on a regional basis. As Naidenova, Parshakov and Chmykhov (2016) already noted, fans and experts have also recognized the necessity of sponsorship for further development and attractiveness. However, fans have concerns about it becoming too commercialized as in men's football. While experts declare firms benefit from sponsorship in women's football in terms of positive image transfer, brand awareness and recognition, the recognition of sponsors by fans is not always given.

7.3 Managerial Implications

This research aims to assist managers in their consideration of whether and how to invest in women's football to build effective partnerships. As Allison (2016) already points out that the goal of women's football should not be to achieve the ROI of men's football, but rather to inspire girls through professionalization, experts also believe that it is important to build strategic long-term partnerships with the primary goal of advancing women's football. According to many experts, firms should consider regional sports sponsorship in women's football to support their local community and develop community relationships, as suggested by Mount and Niro (1995). To achieve this, firms should look for potential clubs nearby that could fit their corporate philosophy and then support them from scratch. Activating women's players in sponsorships, for example by accompanying them and sharing their journey, could be an opportunity to position oneself as a sponsor in the long term. As women are usually more intrinsically motivated for sponsorship, sponsors can be more creative in showcasing the brand than in men's football. For example, they could host a 'Meet the Players Day' to engage fans, tell a story about the players, and display their brand. In addition, experts recommend that firms that may not have the budget to sponsor men's football should take the opportunity to invest in women's football to achieve their marketing objectives with a smaller budget (Kidd 2018). Furthermore, as sponsorship awareness cannot always be guaranteed (Johar, Pham and Wakefield 2006), experts recommend being the main sponsor of a women's team rather than the tenth co-sponsor

of a men's team also reflecting fans' perceptions of sponsorship recognition. Bringing more women into decision-making positions is another aspect that needs to be considered (Burton 2015), as in many clubs and firms the final decisions are still classically made by men, who might have some prejudices against women's football. Therefore, firms should try to achieve a gender balance in decision-making positions to gain insights from both sides. In clubs, for example, former professional women players could take on a more important role at the executive board level. Further, firms should think strategically when leveraging sponsorship, as it is not successful by simply investing money in a club. The values of the sponsored party must match the objectives of the sponsor. Additionally, clubs should also focus on their women's teams by creating synergies. As it is always a question of money, budgets and resources should be freed up to enable further development. The use of social media could also be a way to promote women's football. Nowadays it plays an important role (Vann 2014) and therefore clubs, but also firms can use it to engage with their fans and consumers, as well as with the female players themselves. It is not about copying the men's way, for example by trying to mimic already outdated formats such as the "Sportschau". Rather, it is about finding new ways to support and promote women's football, e.g., by creating shortcuts on Instagram to reach new consumers.

7.4 Limitations

Concerning this study, five limitations must be pointed out. The first one is that this research only focuses on the German market but other countries such as England, the USA, or France might also be of interest as these are more developed and provide insight into how women's football needs to be professionalized and made more attractive. Hence, a study comparing the different countries could be useful to find out the drivers for further development. Furthermore, no gender balance was achieved in this research, especially in the expert interviews, as the football business is still a male domain. In further research, more women should be interviewed to get more diversified results and to find out if results are different with women in leadership

positions. The unbalanced age of the fans is another demographic aspect that influences the results. Fans are in their twenties, with one exception of a forty-year-old fan. The younger generation tends to be more engaged in developing emerging issues such as equality and diversity than the older generation (Deloitte 2021). Thus, further research is needed to determine if and how the perception of sponsorship differs among fans in different age groups. Furthermore, analyzing interviews is always a slightly subjective process in terms of determining the categories used for the coding scheme. As qualitative analysis aims to get a comprehensive view and is often the precursor to quantitative analysis (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006), it is recommended to further explore the topic with quantitative analysis, such as surveys, to get a more unbiased, objective, and broader perspective. Mixed qualitative and quantitative methods can contribute to rich and comprehensive research (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Furthermore, the selection of experts might be too broad to get a specific view from only one of the participants in the sponsorship circle. To begin with, it is good to get a broad overview of the industry, but further research should focus exclusively on one participant in this circle such as agencies, clubs, or firms that are sponsors. However, this research provides some initial insights into women's football sponsorship, its benefits and challenges, and reasons for increasing it.

8 Conclusion

This study leverages the theoretical background of sports sponsorship and women's football to interview two separate groups in the sponsorship circle: professionals operating in the field and fans supporting the sport. The key findings of this study are that despite its lower accessibility and relevance, women's football offers a great opportunity as it is a growing market that transfers positive attributes and enables marketing objectives to be achieved with a lower budget. Hence, the implications for managers are that firms should consider a long-term investment in women's football while remaining conscious of the existing challenges.

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Appendices

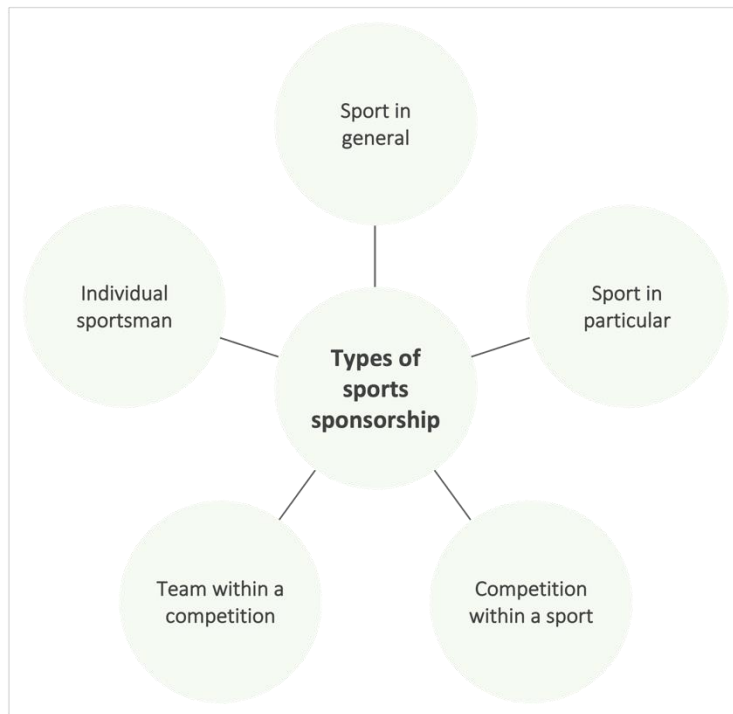


Figure 1: Types of Sports Sponsorship (own figure adapted from Abratt, Clayton and Pitt 1987)



Figure 2: Sports Sponsorship Objectives (own figure adapted from Schönberner and Woratschek 2020)

I am researching the topic of sponsorship in football, with a particular focus on why companies should invest more in women's football. As there are early indications that the drivers for sponsorship in men's and women's football are not the same, I would like to use this study to find out which reasons are important in women's football to help both sports organizations and sponsors.

1. Can you tell me something about your experience with sports sponsorship in football (how long have you been in the sports business/sponsorship)?
2. Then I would directly address the issue of women's football. What do you think has contributed to women's football gaining popularity in recent years?
3. What has contributed to the fact that, contrary to all assumptions about the growing popularity of women's football, it is still not where it should be today?
4. Why do you think companies should invest (or not invest) in women's football?
5. Are there any particular advantages of investing in women's football compared to men's football?
6. Have you noticed any differences between the motivations for investing in men's and women's football? If so, can you explain these differences in more detail?
7. What are the potential challenges or barriers to investing in women's football? Have you encountered any in the past? If so, can you tell me about them?
8. What steps do you think can be taken to develop and promote women's football?
9. Are there any particular strategies or approaches that you would recommend to companies looking to invest in women's football?
10. Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Figure 3: Interview Guide Experts

I am researching the topic of sponsorship in football and in particular why companies should invest more in women's football. As there are early indications that the motives for sponsoring men's and women's football are not the same, I want to use this research to find out which motives are important in women's football to help both sports organizations and sponsors.

1. Can you tell me a little about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?
2. Do you tend to watch women's or men's football?
3. Is there a reason why you tend to watch more men's or women's football?
4. Do you know of any companies that sponsor women's football? If so, what do you think of them?
5. Do you think it is important for companies to sponsor women's football? And why?
6. What do you think are the reasons why companies sponsor women's football?
7. Do you think there are any particular challenges or opportunities associated with sponsoring women's football?
8. How do you assess the rise of women's football in recent years and what do you think is the reason for this?
9. Do you think that sports sponsorship in women's football should increase? Why or why not?
10. Have you ever bought a product or service because it was associated with a women's football team or event?
11. Are there any particular brands that you think should invest in sponsoring women's football? And why?
12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about sponsorship in women's football?

Figure 4: Interview Guide Fans

Participant	Years of experience	Organization type	Job title	Interview duration (minutes)
E1	13	Sponsorship Agency	Director Sales	24
E2	8	Sponsorship Firm	Sports Marketing Manager	26
E3	6	Sponsorship Firm	CEO	35
E4	3	Sponsorship Agency	Manager Sales&Partnerships	22
E5	4	Football Club	Marketing Manager	23
E6	5	Sponsorship Firm	Sports Marketing Coordinator	22
E7	5	Sponsorship Agency	Manager Sponsorship Advisory	17
E8	3	Sports Sponsoring Platform	CEO	21
E9	7	Football Club	Press Spokesman	17
E10	9	Football Club	Head of Women's Football	18

Figure 6: Study Sample Experts

Participant	Age	Gender	Interview duration (minutes)
F1	21	W	14
F2	27	M	19
F3	25	M	12
F4	27	W	10
F5	45	W	16
F6	25	M	13
F7	24	W	12
F8	19	W	11
F9	25	M	11
F10	17	M	13

Figure 5: Study Sample Fans

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Example Quote
Benefits and motives for firms investing in women's football (RQ1)	Authenticity, sympathy, and positive image transfer	"When working with women, I notice that they are a bit more open and authentic when it comes to advertising with them." (E1) "The advantages of women's football are simply that the girls are perceived very authentically and openly and often still have many stories to tell."(E2) "It's just a different level of closeness, which I think is a big advantage in women's football."(E5) "Nevertheless, the men's sport is on a high level, so the athletes are the same, they train a lot, etc., but you don't have this aggressiveness."(E1) "This danger simply does not exist in women's football."(E3) "What I also find very interesting in women's football is that, compared to men's football, the social values that women's football conveys in certain things are much further along."(E6) "Because it has a positive spin-off effect on their brand."(E5) "Women's football is a great opportunity for big companies to position themselves and reach a target group that might not otherwise be reached since football polarizes them." (E7) "Men's football is also very money-oriented. And women's football is exactly the opposite. The women are even more accessible. It's much more about the sport, about this team feeling and not just about individual fighters who want to make a name for themselves. Women's football is simply closer, more familiar and also a bit more progressive." (E8) "Sponsors can benefit from showing how the female players deal with successes and failures. I would say that the men probably have little time or no desire to do that. And that simply allows for completely different sponsorship activities."(E8) "The advantage of women's football in the current situation is that it naturally has certain characteristics that are no longer attributed to men's football. So women's football is perceived as closer and more genuine, which is of course also due to the fact that in recent years there was not so much attention."(E9) "We have to make sure that we inspire the sponsors that women's football has these attributes like authenticity, closeness, honesty and passion."(E9) "I think it can positively influence the image of a brand."(E10) "Women's football is also characterized by the fact that the women are much closer to the fans and sponsors. They are much more grateful and have the desire to do things and make things happen."(E10)
	Unexploited potential market growth	"It would be negligent to neglect it."(E1) "I believe that women's football can offer platforms, because due to the factors described above, many women rotate it and perceive it positively, so that a wide range of buyers can be addressed, who would otherwise not be reached."(E1) "Contracts are concluded here and now with a certain expectation of how the market will develop, but I think I can say that the advertising impact of women is clearly increasing. In other words, we are dealing with a trend sport in terms of media growth rates."(E3) "Women's football is simply a market that is not yet saturated. I think it just needs time to develop and be-come even bigger than it maybe already is."(E4) "For us, it is important to promote women's football because we believe that women's football will grow in the future and be a serious and economic alternative to men's football."(E6) "The second reason is that women's football is simply growing and becoming a business case, so it makes economic sense, and it can also play in the media."(E6) "Ultimately, it's also simply a business, and if you can increase sales through a growing market, that's also a motivation for more sponsorship."(E2) "Because I think it's an area that definitely needs to be promoted."(E5) "Finally, there is also the commercial perspective. You can still get good coverage and a good image these days if you back the right club and then support it accordingly."(E5) "They should definitely invest. If they invest, they are one of the first companies to join in and also show a presence."(E7) "Moreover, you can reach new target groups, and women are often the more attractive brand ambassadors through the advertising channels. That would also be one of the reasons why it is worthwhile to get into women's sports."(E8)
	Lower price as consideration for women's sponsorships	"One advantage is of course that the prices in women's football are still much lower."(E5) "In terms of price, the barrier to entry is quite low and different in comparison to the men."(E4)
	Enhanced quality increases attractiveness	"The better athletic quality now, I don't want to say that it was really bad 10 or 15 years ago, but that has also changed for the better."(E1) "But also, the realization that we are dealing with a sport that is actually attractive has then, of course, for various reasons, led to women's football also gaining more attractiveness and attention."(E3) "Women's football is also a beautiful sport and technically very good, in some cases even better than men's football."(E2) "First, the game itself has improved significantly."(E5) "In terms of quality, there has simply been an extreme leap forward and you can see that conditions have become and are becoming much more professional overall."(E5) "From a sporting point of view, I would say that women's football is not that bad."(E4)

Effective leveraging sponsorships in women's football (RQ2)	Build long-term partnerships	"Ultimately, it's important to see it as a long-term investment rather than a quick win, and thus build long-term partnerships."(E2) "So take the women's team, invite them and accompany them on their travels, equip them with your products and distribute the women's football rights you have bought."(E4) "Everything to do with women's football is more thoughtful, more strategic and driven by the perspective of long-term partnerships that will still have an impact on the brand in ten years' time."(E7) "However, it is also important to avoid signing contracts that only run for one year in order to achieve short-term goals, but rather to set milestones for four, five to ten years in order to see long-term and effective successes."(E7) "Before, it was always annual contracts. This long-term contract is of course good and allows us to plan for the long term."(E10)
	Regionality as criterion for sponsorships	"A long-term investment and regionally bound companies make sense."(E7) "We are noticing more and more that companies see a different need in women's football. So it's also more about regionality and supporting clubs or female athletes in the vicinity to give something back to the region or to be an attractive employer in the region."(E8)
Challenges of sponsorships in women's football (RQ3)	Biases and prejudices among sponsors	"As long as women's football, in quotation marks, had the problem of not being perceived in this way, it was difficult."(E1) "In women's football, a lot is developing in a positive direction, even if it is unfortunately still often overshadowed by men's football."(E2) "These prejudices about return on investment are also a barrier for some companies to invest in women's football."(E2) "Due to the fact that these differences between men and women are so high, many have not even turned to women's football and thus could not perceive that women's football is also better, more beautiful and more attractive under certain other aspects."(E3) "So, I think one original reason, which is in the nature of things, is that women's football of course can't be as dynamic and physical as men's football."(E5) "All football fans will never watch women's football because the classic football fan is still the beer-drinking man who, as stupid as it sounds, likes to watch football but still has a very blunt and simple image of women's football."(E4) "The biggest challenge in recent years is the path to acceptance in general."(E9) "I think many people still have this negative image of women's football in the back of their minds. It is always the image that is burned into people's minds from the past, where they think that women can't play quality football."(E10)
	Bad accessibility as a barrier to further investment	"If you want to develop women's football in Germany, you need more coverage on a permanent basis."(E1) "And that's another point, I think that social media has led to the fact that women's sports in general and football, in particular was more accessible to women in the beginning and then led to the fact that women's football has experienced even greater acceptance."(E1) "Accordingly, sponsors can also help create visibility that the sport itself cannot yet create due to the fact that matches are only broadcast on streaming services."(E6) "It's just that the media doesn't broadcast it enough."(E2) "Also, the women's game times are often at unattractive times when most can't even watch the game. That's simply not solved well enough at the moment."(E2) "For men, this global media presence is already in place, while for women it has yet to be created."(E2) "Women's football needs to be made more accessible to the masses."(E2) "Of course, it's still the case that the media presence of women's football is absolutely low."(E5) "Firstly, I think that the reach is not yet so extreme at the beginning."(E4) "You just have to make the topic more and more visible, bring it into the media and activate it."(E4) "Apart from that, there is also a lack of media coverage, or the matches are broadcast at times when people are not necessarily sitting in front of the TV. In some cases, media coverage is not even possible because the pitches are not equipped with floodlights, so they cannot be televised. The media presence and visibility is simply not there in a way that can create that hype."(E8) "It might not be worth it if the business goal is to generate reach, because women's football doesn't have that reach yet."(E8)
	Unappealing effect of low professionalism level	"The professionalization of women's football should increase."(E2) "Many structures are not yet as professional as in other sports or in men's football in particular. In Germany, this is not yet the case, although there are clubs like Eintracht Frankfurt, Bayern Munich and VfL Wolfsburg. So, there is still a lot to do in that respect."(E5) "But if you professionalize the structures even more and give the women the opportunity to concentrate on nothing else and push the popularity of women's football via the media accordingly, there is a lot of potential."(E5) "That's why I think the primary goal must be to professionalize the 1st Women's Bundesliga and have more teams that bring 5 to 7,000 people to the stadium."(E5) "Yes, one hundred percent, sponsorships could improve the professionalization."(E4) "The level of professionalism still needs to be raised a bit, especially in terms of marketing."(E7) "But what also plays a role are the general conditions. There aren't that many women who make it to the professional level because the promotion of young players isn't there and the perspective isn't there that you can make a living from football as a woman."(E8) "You must make sure that the conditions for the players, but also for everyone else who works in this field, become more professional and that you get away from having to work on the side and that the players can do it professionally."(E9) "Once you have youth centers for all the Bundesliga clubs and youth work is really promoted. You have leagues at the younger girls' level that are also competitive. The development will grow steadily, and it must."(E10) "If 30 per cent must be invested in youth football and infrastructure to develop it, it would be definitely more sustainable for the club, but also for women's football."(E10)

Figure 7: Examples of participant responses about sponsorships of women's football (EXPERTS)

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Example Quote
Potential benefits in women's football (RQ1)	Perceived positivity by fans	"Nevertheless, I feel that women's football is much nicer and more familiar, which of course also creates opportunities for companies to present themselves differently."(F1) "You can identify with it especially young girls, but maybe also young guys can even almost better than with today's men's football."(F2) "The atmosphere is much friendlier and more familiar than with the men in the stadium."(F3) "Companies can also improve their image if they invest in women's football and the positive values are transferred to the brand."(F3) "It is an immense range and that is also a completely different embodiment and charisma. It is much more personal."(F5) "But there are also advantages in women's soccer, as already mentioned, in that there is a completely different charm and character behind it. The focus on sympathy and the interpersonal aspects makes a big difference."(F5) "I think it's important to understand that women's and men's sports are different, but they're both attractive in different ways."(F6) "You can win over the values of women's football by creating more authenticity and a more family-like environment."(F7) "The fact that women's football also stands more for diversity certainly helps some companies to reposition themselves and show themselves as modern, because these issues play a big role in our society nowadays."(F8) "I think companies also use women's football positive attributes for social washing and image enhancement."(F10)
	Enhanced quality increasing attractiveness	"The Women's Champions League is a lot of fun because you can see the growing quality of women's football. In the meantime, I think you can hardly see a difference to men's football, at least in terms of quality."(F1) "Teams that are professionally set up and is then also really fun to watch and then comes much closer to the men's football."(F2) "In addition, attractive soccer was also played, which no longer had anything to do with the origins. There are now grown professional footballer or ex-footballer, who have now become coaches, who themselves have played tournaments at a very high level and have also won. The degree of this professionalism has contributed to the fact that it has become so attractive."(F5) "The league as a whole becomes more professional and competitive, and it's much more interesting to watch."(F6) "I personally feel that the women have become super good and sometimes even play better than the men. The recent successes of the women's national team show the increasing quality on a sporting level."(F7) "When I look at the Women's Champions League, it is played at a very high level, actually no difference to the men's league!"(F8) "I do not see many differences in terms of quality. Well, I think both are of very high quality. They are just different."(F9) "The quality is also quite good, so it's fun to watch women's football."(F9)
Challenges of sponsorships in women's football (RQ3)	Bad accessibility as a barrier to watching it	"I think it's because of the broadcasting rights at the moment. First of all, it's harder to watch the women's Bundesliga because it's only on Magenta."(F1) "There will again be many different channels on which women's soccer will be streamed. For DAZN and Magenta you first have to have access for, which means that it is also more difficult to follow all the games."(F2) "However, it is a pity that women's football is still not as accessible as men's football and therefore it is more difficult to consume it."(F3) "I tend to watch more men's football because it gets more coverage and is more widely available."(F4) "One challenge in promoting women's football in Germany is the lack of attention and coverage compared to men's football. I can see it myself, I don't watch it much because the broadcasts are poor."(F4) "I definitely watch more men's soccer, but that's because, for example, the dates are so stupid that I very rarely get to women's soccer."(F5) "And there, I would say in the last two or three years, I also got interested in women's football because I didn't know any leagues or teams before. Nowadays, you have access to all the platforms that offer the possibility to watch these games."(F6) "Otherwise, it's quite hard for me to watch the games, mainly because I don't have access to too many different streaming platforms."(F6) "I tend to watch more men's football simply because it's more accessible to the public."(F7) "The poor broadcasting situation makes it even more difficult to make women's football more attractive and accessible to fans."(F7) "I watch the women's Bundesliga less because I don't have access to it. I don't even know where it's being broadcast at the moment."(F8) "Yes, definitely that too. I mostly watch via Sky Sports or DAZN and since the Women's Bundesliga is not on there, I don't actively watch it or look for a stream on the internet."(F9) "Women's football is not the focus at all. You don't feel like it's being covered anywhere. You can't still watch it somewhere, so it's not accessible at all. Unlike men's football, you would have to make an active effort to watch women's football."(F10) "If it is more established in the media, if it is reported more, then it will also get more into people's minds. That's why I think it's important that people get access to it first. If they can then watch freely, there is a chance that they will realize that the quality of women's football is not as bad as previously thought."(F10)
	Growing interest in women's football among fans	"You also must be honest and say that the German women were already successful between 2000 and 2010, and they won almost every World Cup or European Championship but still never got the big attention they deserved until EURO 2022. Here, social media also plays a very big and important role."(F2) "Now there are also women's football matches that I really enjoy watching. Especially when it comes to going to the stadium, I like going to the women's games because the prices are much lower than the men's and they still play attractive football."(F3) "I think the rise of women's football in recent years is due to the increased interest in women's equality in general. No matter in which field, the interest in women has increased. And it's the same in women's football."(F4)
	Prejudices still influencing the fans	"I think there is another problem in society. When I watch football with friends, they rarely consider watching the women's game as well because many people still have prejudices."(F1) "Probably the prejudices that women's football has still very low quality and does not play a role are still there."(F1) "I think one challenge is that this professionalism is not yet given and perhaps does not yet have the huge acceptance in society."(F2) "Financing all these sponsorship activities is more difficult in women's football than in men's football because less revenue is generated than in men's football. Currently, the visibility of women's football is still lower despite its growing popularity."(F3) "I remember when I used to watch a match, I always thought it looked more like an amateur kick, and unfortunately a lot of people still see it that way nowadays."(F3) "Also, women's football has to deal with many prejudices, such as poor quality. It has improved in recent years, but apart from some very good games in the Champions League, the quality is still not comparable to men's football."(F4) "Negative stereotypes also play a role, that these prejudices against women are still very present and some sponsors are therefore hesitant to invest in women's football."(F7) "The challenge is probably that not so many people watch. Hardly anyone of my friends watches women's football actively and regularly, which is of course a great pity."(F8) "Men's football just has more meaning, at least that's my feeling, but otherwise, I like to watch both."(F9) "The biggest challenge is that women's football is not very popular yet. I don't think you can make that much money with it."(F9) "That somehow shows that professionalization is not that far advanced there yet."(F10) "The biggest challenge is to improve the very poor image of women's football. When I think about it, none of my friends are very positive about women's football."(F10)

Consumers positive attitude toward sponsorship firms (RQ4)	Sponsorships for further development	"I think it's good when companies sponsor women's football in particular, because it certainly raises awareness and professionalism. At the end of the day, everything depends on money, and the more money a club has at its disposal, the more professional it can be."(F1) "I think sponsorship is important for clubs. Not only does it support the players and teams, but it also helps to establish women's football as a professional sport and give it more exposure, which it definitely deserves. [...] and give it the same opportunities as men's football."(F1) "It shows how important women's football really is when big companies are behind it and sponsor the whole thing, which just shows the relevance of the whole thing."(F3) "If they have more money available, they can of course expand their academies and also promote young talents, and that is of course the basic building block for a more professional women's football."(F3) "It creates more visibility for women's football when you hear that big companies are also behind women's football and invest there and also actively promote it."(F3) "Especially the professionalism in the German Bundesliga is not that high at the moment, which could definitely be improved by more sponsorship."(F4) "The money is needed to make the sport more professional and therefore more attractive."(F4) "Just there, sponsors should do immensely important work to subsidize such a thing, for example, with raffles, promotions and perimeter advertising, so that the stadiums are filled, and the teams thus receive support."(F5) "I think it's immensely important because it clearly spreads a lot more messages, the sport is much more broadly based and is also carried further into the Federal Republic."(F5) "It is very important that firms invest in women's football. You notice in almost every sport, but especially in football, that the success not only of a team but of a league goes hand in hand with the money and the inflow of money."(F6) "The women's teams are just as dependent on money, and I also think that the professionalism and attractiveness of football would increase as a result."(F7) "In addition, the sponsorships allow the women to concentrate much better on football and to practice it even more professionally."(F8) "Absolutely, with the help of sponsorship, more money is circulating that can be put into the promotion of women. Youth work is also needed here; I notice myself that it is very poor in women's football and often receives no attention."(F8) "It is a very important source of income for many clubs, also in men's football. And with the money, the clubs can invest much more, buy new and better players or invest in training methods so that the players are better trained and the quality increases."(F9) "It probably helps that money comes in and that it can become more professional. Because I think if it becomes more attractive and more professional, it will also become more interesting for the spectators."(F10)
	Average recognition of sponsorships among fans	"I would say that I don't actively notice them, but rather passively remember them, especially larger sponsors. However, I couldn't name many sponsors now, neither men nor women."(F1) "I don't think they would be as present for me if they weren't the name sponsor of the Women's Bundesliga."(F2) "Definitely, so Schaebens, of course stands out. They were never so well known to me before as a brand and if you hear it meanwhile, you can also assign it pretty accurately." (F2) "Yes, definitely. Adidas and Nike are also sponsors of their sportswear, and Schaebens is of course the main sponsor of the women of FC Köln. Those are the ones that come directly to my mind."(F3) "But mostly I only notice the big sponsors like the shirt sponsor and not the smaller companies."(F4) "I think that some companies influence me unconsciously, because I have them in the back of my mind when I make buying decisions."(F4) "But no, because of sponsorships I have never bought a product."(F5) "Of course, it may be that I somehow noticed the brand more positively and that's why I bought something from them but I don't remember consciously buying products from a sponsor of a women's football team."(F7) "Yes, I recognize them, especially big sponsors, because of course the jersey sponsor is very noticeable. Especially since I buy a jersey myself from time to time and then the sponsor catches my eye."(F8) "Yes, I do recognize some, especially the companies that somehow sponsor the jerseys, because that's what gets the most attention."(F9)
	Major, German firms as sponsors	"I think it is also important that companies tend to organize themselves regionally. You can see that there is a lot of resentment in men's football when a club is bought up by Arab sheikhs. That simply doesn't go down well; more regional, German companies are much better regarded."(F1) "Large, German companies such as DHL, Telekom or also car manufacturers like VW, which would sponsor at the cup, also all fit well."(F2) "I wouldn't relate the sponsors now only to the cosmetics industry."(F2) "But I don't want women's football to become as commercialised as men's football already is. So a good compromise has to be found between investing more money but not over-commercialising."(F4) "For sure, big, branded companies should also focus on women's soccer."(F5) "I think that any company that wants to be associated, for example, with women's empowerment, equality and everything related to sport and fashion could be a possible company. I also think that any company that represents the values of these values in women's sport could invest. It does not matter if it is a big or small company, but the bigger the better."(F6) "It should definitely not only be companies that offer products for women. I would find it a pity if it was only about fulfilling the typical clichés. Companies that offer unisex products would probably be the best option."(F8) "It doesn't really matter; I think all companies should invest. I think it depends a bit on who the target group really is."(F9) "I think it's the big sporting goods companies like Nike, Adidas, and Puma who also have a lot of money from marketing and can polarize."(F10)

Figure 8: Examples of participant responses about sponsorships of women's football (FANS)

Transcripts Experts

Interview Experts Coding Scheme:

Authenticity, sympathy, and positive image transfer	Unexploited potential market growth	Lower price as consideration for women's sponsorships	Enhanced quality increases attractiveness	Build long-term partnerships
Regionality as criterion for sponsorships	Biases and prejudices among sponsors	Bad accessibility as a barrier to further investment	Unappealing effect of low professionalism level	

Interview Expert 1

Can you tell me something about your experience with sports sponsorship? (How long have you been working in the sports business/sponsoring?)

Well, definitely at least since 2010, when I started working in the club and before that I also worked in sponsoring for quite some time. Since 2017 I have been working for the agency in the hospitality sector.

Then you must have already had some experience in sponsoring?

Yes, when I think back now, at the beginning in Düsseldorf on Brehmstrasse, when ice hockey was still played in the old Düsseldorf Hall. That's also where we implemented all the sponsors. It's funny, because at that time Metro was the sponsor of the DEG and they always brought in their brands. That's how other brands got involved in sponsoring, because Metro said, "If you want to be on our shelves, you have to sponsor the DEG. This also led to the emergence of brands where people wondered what they were doing in sports and then did sponsoring there. This was always super interesting. I will never forget, for example, how we drove an old VW bus from Creme 21, a 70s brand, actually a women's brand, onto the ice and had to throw creams that were actually for women into the audience. That's my affinity with sponsorship in my first years in sponsorship.

Then I would go directly to the topic of women's sports/women's soccer. What do you think has contributed to women's soccer/sports gaining popularity in recent years?

Of course, the sporting relevance of soccer is an argument in my eyes. The better athletic quality now, I don't want to say that it was really bad 10 or 15 years ago, but that has also changed for the better. So, people always want to see positive athletic professional sport. As long as women's soccer, in quotation marks, had the problem of not being perceived in this way, it was difficult. I remember at the beginning when I was still a student it was said that the women's national team would lose to a B-youth men's team. As long as that was the case, it was certainly harsh and exaggerated, women's soccer was not well regarded. But there was just also an extremely professional development in the sport, that nowadays the boys would definitely not win against any Bundesliga women's team, ever! So, the relevance of the sport, and I think that is always very important in everything, so the sport must be good! And the sport just got better and better. And that's another point, I think that social media has led to the fact that women's sports in general and soccer, in particular was more accessible to women in the beginning and then led to the fact that women's soccer has experienced even greater acceptance.

Exactly, social media plays a huge role nowadays and if this is promoted, then at some point companies will pay attention to it.

Yes, but I also think that women are more active in social media, at least I notice that more in my environment, and if you have the social current that promotes that, you say: Now there's women's power and we're also pushing now and specifically going into the men's domain and the sport has also gotten better. When there is a higher level of participation and identification, the issue is pushed. And if many women say it's important for us, social media has been the driver, because if women represent a larger share of multipliers than men do of multipliers, then of course they push their issues. And that's a good thing, of course. For me, those are the two factors.

You already invest in women's sports/women's soccer and are already active in the field, aren't you?

We support clubs that have a strong women's team, so of course we always support that as well.

How is it with you, what motives do you have? Is it simply because you support a strong men's team and that is then bundled together with the women's team in the background?

We take care of the marketing activities, and the approach is of course always to bring all departments of a club forward and if you of course have a women's soccer department, then that naturally lends itself. It would be negligent to neglect it.

Do you think it is more difficult to convince companies to sponsor the women's team as well?

The answer comes when you look at the development of women's soccer in recent years. The teams that had a strong men's team have come further than the clubs that have a traditionally strong women's team, such as Potsdam. If you can create synergies there, which at the moment is still in quotes a start-up funding, which can be created with the men's sport, to bring such women's teams forward, which then in the end have the same relevance as the men's teams. For example, you can see this in Spain: Barcelona or Madrid now also always make 80,000 spectators at one game or another. And in Germany, and that's why I would separate the two markets, I would assess that it's currently just easier when you have a strong men's team because that pulls the women's team just in the area of sponsorship and so just again. I think just individual women's teams or clubs that traditionally have only strong professional women's team, have it more difficult. If you want to look at it exactly, is now a feeling of mine, I cannot prove it, but I think that more and more women's teams that then also have a strong, professional men's team come forward.

What is your opinion on why companies should or should not invest more in women's sports?

I think companies should invest in women's soccer but in a more targeted way. On the brand side, I don't think enough thought has been put into it. I believe that women's soccer can offer platforms, because due to the factors described above, many women rotate it and perceive it positively, so that a wide range of buyers can be addressed, who would otherwise not be reached. Every brand that brings this across authentically, since advertising in sports always has something to do with authenticity, and if it fits and doesn't seem contrived, then it will be very successful.

Do you think that there would be a special advantage of investing in women's sports, especially compared to men's sports?

One is of course the credibility in the target group of women. The other is perhaps also a differentiation from a men's sport, if now the pictures of Frankfurt hooligans are considered, which one does not have in women's sports. Nevertheless, the men's sport is on a high level, so the athletes are the same, they train a lot, etc., but you don't have this aggressiveness. That could be a field where you could positively differentiate yourself in women's sports. In addition, if you do it smartly, an organic involvement in social media, which doesn't seem forced, would be an advantage to achieve a greater activation as well. If you trigger that, you could achieve a greater reach through it.

So those are the advantages then, but do you think there are also challenges or obstacles that could arise right now if you then want to invest in women's sports?

The reach is smaller, of course, but you still must look at it selectively. For example, if you support the German national team at a World Cup, there is a big reach. But at the moment, the reach is not given in the women's Bundesliga. At the end of the day, it's always about contact numbers, and that creates problems in women's soccer. Accordingly, as already mentioned, it must be done selectively, but even there you must be careful. For example, if you want to sponsor the German women's national team as a flagship, you can't just do it at the event, you must do it years before and after. You must be smart and work towards this peak event, where you have comparable ratings. Between or in the normal season you have disadvantages because the range is not given there.

What steps do you think could be taken to develop and promote women's sports?

Women's soccer has a different competitive environment than other women's sports because it is always compared to men's soccer. If you want to develop women's soccer in Germany, you need more coverage on a permanent basis.

More reach then, for example, through TV rights?

That's the question, of course. TV rights are always good, but if you see that women are more likely to be on social media, don't you need more social media formats? You don't always have to emulate men's soccer, especially not things that haven't been fashionable in men's soccer for 10 years. That's why you must generate the same kind of moving image through women's soccer in other formats, which then also results in a higher level of attention. You shouldn't try to reach the second level of men's soccer, you would never get a traditional sports show for women like the one for men, but it would possibly make sense to stream the women's Bundesliga match day for it on Twitch. This would require a closer look at the target audience to figure out which formats might work best. But the general bottleneck is reach!

Let's assume you would now recommend a company to invest in women's sports. How would you go about it? Would you have any specific strategies or approaches on how to convince the company?

Strategies must exist and are the basic building block of sponsorship. Just spending money with the goal of being present doesn't work. In general, you can't define strategies, but it must always be adapted specifically to the brand, and you must see which sport and which framework parameters, such as the problem and the solution approach of the brand, fit.

Do you have any other comments in general on the subject?

We simply need to develop the whole topic we also need more women in this male domain also in sports management, sports marketing. otherwise, is the same what we said at the beginning. i have never thought about it that women, for example, advertising brands, see differently. And without women in positions, this will always be the case. And I also believe that it's extremely important that we get women in leadership positions. An example from me: I already had three meeting rounds this morning and you are now the first woman I see. In our team leader positions, there are only one or two females. This all shows the strong male domain in the sports business. But as long as it's always the case that women are the exotics in the sports business, which is completely wrong and out of step with society, this other area won't change either. As a man I don't have the female perception, I can support it very strongly, nevertheless it is not the same, which is why you need the women in management positions to get also other insights. The solutions always lie with the people. You have to change it first in the working world, i.e. women have to get into decision maker positions on brand level to make women's soccer more attractive. The solutions always lie with the people.

Interview Expert 2

In women's soccer, a lot is developing in a positive direction, even if it is unfortunately still often overshadowed by men's soccer. But you can't really compare it and accordingly have to look at it in a more differentiated way. You can't simply take speed as an argument that women's soccer is not as good as men's soccer. Women's soccer is also a beautiful sport and technically very good, in some cases even better than men's soccer. I also just watched the Champions League quarterfinal FC Bayern vs Arsenal in the stadium the other day and it was really good technically, but also in terms of pace. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of prejudices such as bad return on investment and that women don't play good football, but that's an outdated way of thinking

To start off, just an introduction to yourself first, can you tell me about your experience in sports sponsorship, in soccer, how long have you been in it, etc.?

I currently work in sports marketing at sports manufacturer and look after all the male and female athletes who are under contract with us in the West region, as it is simply a metropolitan area. I'm their first point of contact when it comes to service, but also marketing the athletes through storytelling and product launches. I'm the link between the brand and the players. I've been doing that at this firm for four years now. Before that I was already at another sports manufacturer, the main competitor, for four years and had already worked in soccer because that's simply my passion. Back then, I already noticed how the focus is moving more and more in the direction of women's soccer and that, since the last World Cup in 2019, the big sports outfitters in particular have been using such major events as an opportunity and launching huge campaigns there. Since then, there has also been increased investment in women's soccer. We are still lagging a bit and has only recently started to invest more in women. That's because we want to use the side effect of being a role model in a positive way. This is especially important for girls and female consumers around the world, because many stop playing soccer for various reasons, for example to focus on their studies. As a brand, you can support girls and motivate them with storytelling of successful women in soccer. As a brand, you can no longer afford to invest only in men's soccer, you also need a good women's portfolio, and you can no longer think only one-dimensionally. This would not go down well with consumers either, after all, consumers are quite decisive in how brands operate. The target group for sports equipment suppliers is Gen Z, and they question brands much more than previous generations.

What do you think has contributed to women's soccer gaining popularity in recent years?

Basically, I think that five to ten years ago, when the Germans played in big tournaments, we also watched at home, so I wouldn't say there was no interest before. It's just that the media doesn't broadcast it enough. But if there were big events coming up, like the European Championship, the World Cup or the Olympics, and the Germans were successful, you heard about it. The only problem was that fans couldn't be heard between the big tournaments, but nowadays social media is going in a new direction and offering new marketing opportunities. Players already have their own stage through their social media accounts and can gain even more exposure through their partners and clubs. In this way, players develop their own stories and are no longer perceived as just national players, making them more interesting to brands. This then also helps to increase popularity. In terms of reach and money, you can't compare it to men's soccer at all at the moment, which is why you should look at women's soccer in isolation. The women are in no way inferior to the men, and you can see their success, be it in clubs like Wolfsburg or Bayern, which play at a high level. Ultimately, it's always a question of money. Also, the women's game times are often at unattractive times when most can't even watch the game. That's simply not solved well enough at the moment.

Why do you think companies should or shouldn't invest in women's soccer?

If the target group fits, companies should invest in women's soccer. From the point of view of sports equipment suppliers, whose target group is Gen Z, it is no longer enough to invest only in men's soccer; they must also support women's soccer. On the one hand, they have a role model function and on the other hand, they reach the target

group in a more targeted way. There are millions of girls playing soccer who also need role models and inspiration. This cannot only be fulfilled by a Cristiano Ronaldo or Messi but should also be covered by a Lena Oberdorf and other female soccer players. In this way, young girls are shown that they can also achieve something, like their role models, and do not have to directly stop and struggle with the thought that one could not be successful as a woman in soccer. That's why it's important to invest in women's soccer, especially since all sports outfitters have the goal of inspiring people to play more sports. In addition, sports outfitters will also lose a large group of customers if girls stop playing soccer at the age of 16. **In summary, there is a large market in women's soccer that still has growth potential, while men's soccer is already very saturated from an economic perspective.** Of course, this also plays a role when you want to serve a market that has great growth potential. Sponsorship in women's soccer promotes the image of the brand, appeals to consumer needs and represents a large market with growth potential.

Are there other differences in sponsorships between women's and men's soccer?

When working with women, I notice that they are a bit more open and authentic when it comes to advertising with them. With the men, who already earn thousands of euros, I notice that they are not as motivated as the women, some of whom still barely earn anything. The women are more grateful and happier about partnerships and live them much more than the men. They sometimes have a lot of desire to be activated, e.g. through photo shoots etc., while with the men you sometimes really still have to struggle to organize a photo shoot with them. **The advantages of women's soccer are simply that the girls are perceived very authentically and openly and often still have many stories to tell,** while with the men most of it has already been told. So, you can still tell cool stories as a brand or company and present the product or yourself as a company cool in the context.

Are there differences between the motivations of sponsorships in men's or women's soccer?

In soccer there is still some overlap, such as the attraction that it is desirable to sign the best athletes and thus associate them with the brand. Especially in well-known tournaments like the Champions League or the World and European Championships, it is important for sports equipment suppliers to have the best players wearing their shoes and representing the brand. With women, it's even more about sports equipment suppliers benefiting from the domino effect of promoting women even more and giving them a stage. **For men, this global media presence is already in place, while for women it has yet to be created.** In addition, inspiration for young people also plays a major role, because many girls stop playing soccer prematurely or don't even get the idea of playing soccer in the first place. **Counteracting this is the motivation of sports outfitters here. Ultimately, it's also simply a business, and if you can increase sales through a growing market, that's also a motivation for more sponsorship.** Nowadays, you can't just promote and sponsor men's soccer.

Are there any obstacles or challenges to sponsorships in women's soccer?

Ultimately, everything is always budget-dependent, and that's why it's important to free up budgets and resources for women's soccer as well. It wasn't that long ago that I wasn't just looking after men's soccer, it's only in the last few years that I've also been responsible for women's football. Resources are needed, both financial and material, to address the issues and create opportunities. **The prejudices about return on investment are also a barrier for some companies to invest in women's soccer.** Of course, the fact that this is supposed to be low is also not correct and is primarily based on this prejudice. If you as a sporting goods manufacturer succeed in motivating more women to stay on the ball in the long term, this will also pay off in the long term.

What do you think can be done to develop and promote women's soccer?

The professionalization of women's soccer should increase, because in the Bundesliga, for example, many are still far from playing professional soccer and are pursuing their studies or part-time jobs on the side. Something should definitely change in this area so that women are paid accordingly so that they can also play professionally, which is of course also a question of money. **If women can play professional soccer, the quality of women's soccer would also increase in the long term.** If women could focus only on soccer like men, performance and development would automatically increase. Accordingly, professionalization should be promoted both in terms of infrastructure, pay and kick-off times. In addition, broadcasting also plays a role, as the women's Bundesliga is currently only broadcast on Magenta, serving only a small niche and not freely accessible. **Women's soccer needs to be made more accessible to the masses.** If top matches such as derbies or even cup matches were shown publicly, that would already help women's soccer a lot.

Can you name any specific approaches or strategies for companies looking to invest in women's soccer?

When it comes to sponsorship, it very much depends on the company. As a sporting goods manufacturer, you try to be perceived as a major player in women's soccer and build a presence by signing the best players. At the same time, the top teams are also important for the company to be able to dictate long-term success. **Ultimately, it's important to see it as a long-term investment rather than a quick win, and thus build long-term partnerships**

Interview Expert 3

How long have you been involved in sponsorship in the sports sector?

We have already been active in sports sponsorship in women's soccer for about 5 or 6 years.

So, what do you think has helped women's soccer gain popularity, especially in recent years?

On the one hand, there is of course an enormous need to catch up in that women's soccer has unjustly led a shadowy existence for many years and has not really been considered. Of course, everyone involved recognized this and everything that goes in the direction of equality and all the regulations in this regard. But also, the realization that we are dealing with a sport that is actually attractive has then, of course, for various reasons, led to women's soccer also gaining more attractiveness and attention. In today's society, it is unfortunately the case that you first have to put the spotlight on some things, which in our case is achieved most quickly and easily through the medium of TV. This then makes things better known and more popular, and of course also the efforts we have nationally and internationally in the entire media sector. Now especially through the women and the associated games of the national team or some particularly outstanding teams have of course helped to increase the appeal and popularity. That's when a positive avalanche starts rolling.

What was the reason for the fact that, contrary to all assumptions about the growing popularity of women's soccer, women's soccer today is still not where it should be?

In answering this question, I think one should be very careful. There are certain sports that are performed equally by women and men, where quite simply the women might receive a higher degree of attention because what they show is quite simply more beautiful and more aesthetic. In sports, we often tend to use higher, further and faster as a standard of evaluation, as we have been educated to do by the media. Of course, this is only possible to a limited extent in soccer. This is obvious to everyone if you consider, for example, that we not only separate soccer by gender, but also by age group. These age groups are not only a symbol of how experienced one is, but also of what physical conditions one has. You just have to accept that the physical conditions of women are different from those of men. Here one must understand then that "higher, faster further" should not be the measure of the evaluation. But this is a problem, because many unfortunately do not see it that way, which I find very unfortunate but to a certain extent is also simply human. Due to the fact that these differences between men and women are so high, many have not even turned to women's soccer and thus could not perceive that women's soccer is also better, more beautiful and more attractive under certain other aspects. However, as long as people only hear the disadvantages and only occasionally see something and thus feel confirmed, but never go to the stadium themselves to get an opinion from the other side, they cannot be convinced of the opposite at all. If I think back to my own history, for example, and I have a positive attitude towards women's soccer, then I have to say that if women's soccer had been as attractive in the past as it is today, then I would have preferred a women's soccer game to a men's game with my children. The reasons for this are on the one hand the prices, as tickets for women's soccer games are significantly cheaper, but on the other hand the aggressiveness of the fans also plays a role. This is much higher among the men, and I remember how I once had to run away with my children and my wife because there were too many aggressive fans. This danger simply does not exist in women's soccer. Furthermore, I could have used the women's soccer games to explain tactics to my sons, who also all played soccer, much better than in men's soccer, because there is often also unfair play, such as being intentionally injured. There are really elementary differences, and when I look at the games of the women, I would have been very happy about the whole accompanying program at that time, of course. In a few years this might sound negative, but currently women's soccer is for me the kindest alternative to watch soccer as a family.

You are already the main sponsor of a women's team in the German Bundesliga. Can you tell me the reasons why you decided to invest in the women's team back then?

This is a complex question that is not easy to answer. For one thing, we heard in the context of the inquiry that sponsors are being sought who also have an affinity for women in terms of their product range. At the time, we were and possibly still are the only sponsor in the first and second Bundesliga to offer products that are almost exclusively for women. Otherwise, there are only sponsors who offer men's products or unisex products. We then saw this gap and took the opportunity, which then went in different directions. On the one hand, we wanted to give women's soccer a different face, which was initially our slogan, but behind it we wanted to find other and more sponsors in women's soccer. We deliberately wanted to show other companies that had not thought about it before, even though they produce women's products, that it is attractive to invest in women's soccer. Of course, we knew from the beginning that the main and jersey sponsorships for women would only cost a fraction of what they would for men. In the beginning, we were unsure how many years we would have to invest before it made sense. In the meantime, we can say that it makes sense from the 4th or 5th year onwards, purely in terms of the advertising impact. But we took two other aspects into account right from the start. First, we felt that because of the advertising impact, however you measure it, it was important to make the sponsorship regional or even national. When I take into account what we spend on advertising, this arrangement in women's soccer is in the low single digits, and for

us it's even less. But 98% of our conversations revolve around sponsorship in women's soccer, and not just from the women's side, but mainly from the men's side. The topic now has a positive connotation among the men as well. We didn't really expect that. At the beginning, we thought it would make up maybe 10% of our conversations, not 98%; we were extremely positively surprised by it. When you're a family business, you're often asked for donations, sponsorships and things like that, so you can almost staff an entire department with that. Instead of sponsoring the U21 men's team, we focus our fiscal investments exclusively on the women's teams, especially at the moment of our current club, because that's an incredible arrangement for us, which is also well received by everyone. In terms of in-kind contributions, we're also open to other things, but most breeding or booster clubs don't want that at all, they often just want money. So we've basically killed several birds with one stone in a really positive sense.

Why do you think more companies should or should not invest in women's soccer?

Contracts are concluded here and now with a certain expectation of how the market will develop, but I think I can say that the advertising impact of women is clearly increasing. In other words, we are dealing with a trend sport in terms of media growth rates. If I can buy something relatively cheap today that will be much more expensive tomorrow, that makes pure commercial sense. The second thing is that emancipation has made it time to stand up for women. Fortunately, we don't do it only in women's soccer, but it can be made visible. For example, we have three women on our advisory board, and everyone in business asks me how that's possible, because most companies fail to do that. But that doesn't matter so much anymore, because the main thing is that we do many different things to promote women. With us, it's also not just a purely financial arrangement, but we also contribute a lot of time and creativity without getting involved in the sporting side, because that's left to the coaching staff. In addition to the outward effect, you shouldn't underestimate the inward effect, because that plays a big role, especially in family businesses. Since we predominantly sell products to the target group of women, we also employ a relatively large number of women. I don't want to deny that they aren't also interested in men's soccer, but of course you motivate your own female employees much better with women's soccer than with men's soccer. It's a super complex issue, but it always goes in a positive direction.

Have you been able to identify differences between the motivations in men's and women's soccer?

Yes, first of all you have to distinguish between the typical patron and the sponsor. The patron is actually detrimental to soccer in the long run, but you can't do without him. But if we then focus on the sponsor, it's basically the case that you can judge different qualities there. Especially in men's soccer, there are sponsors who are very professional. Of course, professionalism increases with the size of the team and decreases with the size. It's like going down from the 2/3 Bundesliga in men's soccer to the district league. In women's soccer, there are few teams that are professionally equipped and have a higher budget. There are also differences in the target group. For example, you can't just offer products for men and then sponsor women's soccer. You have to ask yourself to what extent that makes sense. Nevertheless, it seems to make sense, but the design is quite different.

Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in your investments?

Yes, we already encountered obstacles at the club we are supporting, since it was an elevator team. After the team was relegated again, the club wanted to make an appointment with us to negotiate by how much we would cut the sponsorship budget, as this would be the normal process in the event of relegation. However, we felt it was important to send a signal and did not cut the budget, but actually increased it, which is actually very unusual. The reason for this was that we saw the relegation as a streak of bad luck and still wanted to believe in women's soccer in the long term and support it accordingly. On the other hand, as a sponsor you also have a certain concern that the positive development and increasing attractiveness in terms of advertising of women's soccer will lead to other sponsors entering the market and thus displacing established sponsors. This can lead to the development of a so-called two-tier society, which already exists in men's soccer but is also present in women's soccer. This is derived from sponsorship money, but also from television money, although television money does not currently play a major role in women's soccer. But if sponsorship money is distributed in such an unfortunate and extreme way, which is to be expected, then the two-tier society will be permanently implemented. That is, of course, a concern of mine, and that's why I'm also very interested in sponsorship money and activities being weighted more heavily in my own club, too, so that things don't become too divisive. Apparently, however, we have to be very attractive as a sponsor, because one or the other very successful club has already asked us whether we want to do a sponsorship on our sleeve. That's because as a brand we take on a completely different mediating role for women's soccer, as well as the credibility is much greater through us and are therefore very attractive for clubs.

What steps do you think can be taken to develop and promote women's soccer?

Basically, we want to expand and continue along the path we've taken. Examples of this would be to show some women's soccer in the sports show, the goal of the month, or to show important games like the DFB Cup in prime time. In addition, using our club as an example, it would be helpful here for the women to also play in bigger stadiums from time to time, as this would also allow new national records to be set in terms of spectator numbers.

So the measures taken so far are on the right track, but they need to be continued. What is not needed, however, is for women's soccer to gain interest only because of the failure in men's soccer, see the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Do you have any specific strategies or approaches that companies could take to successfully invest in women's soccer in the future?

When thinking about the players on the men's teams, some are already happy if you even get an autograph session. Women have suffered from excessive attention to men for so long that they have some catching up to do. **They are communicative, creative and you can engage them in a hugely positive way.** Today, when you consider that the advertising share of online advertising is increasing elementally, and when you consider what can be achieved many times better with women than with men, it's an attractive and sensible investment for any advertiser for whom women are attractive as a target group. The women's teams want, but do not have the opportunity to live this out, because there the sponsors with investments as well as creativity are missing and do not demand it. Fortunately, this is slowly settling through supply and demand increasingly, but most are not aware of this.

Interview Expert 4

As I said, the aim is to find out a little bit what the motives for sponsoring women's football might be. I would like to start at the very beginning and ask you what experience you have had with sports sponsorship in football? How long have you been in this business?

Yes, briefly about me. I've been an employee at the agency for over three years now, mainly responsible for one team, I'm responsible for all kinds of teams or projects, so e-football, the first team and somehow also internationalization. And for two or three years now, the women's team, which was promoted to the Landesliga at the weekend, has also been part of it. It's still very low threshold, but it's a cool and exciting topic that is really relevant for society.

Then I would go directly to the topic of women's football. What do you think has contributed to women's football gaining popularity, especially in recent years?

Yes, I think it has simply become a socially relevant issue. It's not just about women or football per se, but I think diversity, equality, etc. are the issues that have brought the whole thing to the fore. And as it is in sport, the organizations behind it always try to follow the trends somehow. Whether it's e-sports like e-football or diversity and equality, of course everyone is quick to follow. Of course, there is a first mover, where somehow Wolfsburg or Barcelona developed the top teams and then jumped on the bandwagon, so to speak, or stragglers like BVB, who realized a few years later that the topic is relevant and said, "Yes, let's get on board." I think the whole thing really has something to do with social enlightenment and awareness of equality.

Why do you think companies should or should not invest in women's football?

Well, I find it mega exciting. **Firstly, I think that the reach is not yet so extreme at the beginning.** That is, if you watch a classic Bundesliga match, not really many people watch. But it's going up, we saw that in the last final between Germany and England. I think there were over 17 million viewers on ARD. That is of course extreme. So from the company's point of view, social issues are very relevant again. You have your finger on the pulse, **you broadcast quality, you support a women's team, you can do employer branding and show yourself as diverse. In this way, companies can perhaps stand out a little from other classic male companies in terms of values and be very modern.** And if you present it in the right way and use it with the right leverage, you can also achieve reach. Depending on how you put such a package together with a team, Barcelona for example achieved a sell-out stadium at the Clasico last year. Companies can then do some interesting promotions and suddenly it works. So, I think if you do a theme like that really well and invest a bit of creativity, it's a relevant theme.

Do you think there are particular advantages to investing in women's football compared to men's football?

Yes, although in men's football it is of course classically about reach, brand image, brand values and perception. But in men's football, companies can also quickly get burned by the fact that men's football is quickly perceived as over-commercialized and does not reach the roots of football. You can do that quite differently in women's football. There, people can still be really enthusiastic about football: Why are we supporting this again? Equal diversity and so on is something you don't have with the men. Sometimes they say, okay, sponsor the big multi-millionaires here and that's it.

Do you think there are different motivations in sponsorships with the men or with the women?

Yes, there are different motivations. It is quite clear that sponsoring women's football is almost CSR. That's a stupid way of putting it, but somehow it goes hand in hand. **In terms of price, the barrier to entry is quite low and different in comparison to the men.** I think there are also companies that sponsor the women's club to use the club's logo. That's the brand, or the football club stands for something. That's not only the first team, that's also the club

itself with, for example, a handball team. And that is perhaps also the cheapest and most favourable entry hurdle to get the logo and at the same time to have a socially relevant point of reference. You don't necessarily have that as a sponsor of the first team. And I would say that this issue of social responsibility that you take on, so to speak, brings the greatest relevance with it. Of course, if you then single out individual athletes, like Sam Kerr, who is on the FIFA cover and plays for Chelsea, she also has over 1 million followers. Those followers then also get carried away. That's probably 70-80% of the men who follow her, but you reach the target group in a completely different way, with a completely different lever than usual.

Are there challenges or obstacles to investing in women's football? Or have you encountered any at your club, for example?

Yes, of course, no relevance. We play in the Landesliga, and if they play against Kirchderne or something on half a cinder pitch/artificial turf pitch and 100 people watch it on a Sunday in the rain, then it has no relevance. These are always issues that need to be explained and you have to take them away. Right now, I don't know if you've noticed, we have the World Cup in New Zealand this year and there is no rights holder buying the rights, that is, no one who wants to broadcast. This also raises the question of why no one is interested. Has the issue been hyped up so cheaply? Does it have this relevance because it is really hyped up? Or is it only the top games like the final that work because somehow it doesn't necessarily work around them. Do you watch the women's Bundesliga?

Also rarely, but also simply because I don't have access to it. So at the moment it's shown on Magenta and I don't have Magenta.

Well, that's also one of the problems you can look at. I could not have answered that question.

But it's simple, if you don't have these streaming platforms, or rather these niche streaming platforms, then unfortunately it's really difficult to follow the Bundesliga.

Yes, that's the way it is, then issues like equal pay are also relevant, but you also have to be able to explain it. There are ratings of maybe 4,000 people watching a women's game, and then that compares to 500,000 or 300,000 for a Bundesliga game, which makes the issue very difficult. So I think the idea is either regionality, meaning you support a regional women's team no matter where it is, or you do it really out of the CSR idea and to keep up with the trend a bit. I think that's what I've taken away from the conversations I've had about women's football so far.

What measures do you think could then be taken to develop and promote women's football?

The media extension is particularly important. Because the broadcasting landscape is poorly structured, you need 18 different streaming portals to watch everything. I think if one of the hurdles is just lowered a bit, then you can also watch women's football. I do think it's stupid that FIFA probably set the price for the rights to women's football enormously high and then nobody wants to buy them. Why don't they make it extremely cheap for the first three to four years so that it's on free TV, maybe on Sky, or make a documentary about it so that people just watch it? I think then the interest can grow. From a sporting point of view, I would say that women's football is not that bad. Some games are not necessarily comparable to the men's Champions League games, of course. And if it is presented in a cool way and is accessible, people will watch it. Then you will see very quickly whether it is relevant or not. If you put football behind huge paywalls now, then everyone is fighting for people's attention - even we as a professional club have to fight so that we don't lose the young people. Even we with the first team have problems with the fact that people sometimes prefer to watch Twitch in the evening. It's difficult to bring in the topic of women's football.

Yes, the main problem is still a bit of professionalism. The women's national league in particular is not yet quite as professional as in England or the USA, for example, where they are actually all professional. Do you think sponsors could also play a role?

Yes, one hundred percent, sponsorships could improve the professionalization. I actually think that the Premier League is doing quite well, that the games are even regularly sold out, as I once heard. So now you can bring in sponsors who bring in knowledge, for example, distributors. Or you simply take one of these Twitch people with you who then stream it. They are then also sponsors at the same time and contribute their knowledge. You can also create reference cases together with the partners and they can test products in them? You should simply try to involve the sponsors. That can be done much more easily than in men's football, which is already much too professional, I would say. That's definitely an idea to make it more accessible and inclusive.

Are there any strategies or approaches you would recommend to companies looking to invest in women's football? Let's say you need to talk to sponsors and sell them, say, women's football. How would you do that? What strategies would you present to them?

It's not just that you occupy the whole brand space like in another sport and say "Here we are, hello", but that you create content. So take the women's team, invite them and accompany them on their travels, equip them with your products and distribute the women's football rights you have bought. Distribute the sponsorship package yourself,

i.e. communicate it to everyone, because it thrives on you doing cool actions with them. It doesn't work if you are only visible on their platform, but if the whole theme is taken away and there is a presence around the company. And with us, we try to combine the whole thing in such a way that we say, maybe the first men's team will also join in to create interfaces, to enliven the topic even more. It's no longer classic sponsorship, but I think you have to invest a bit more and bring more creativity to the table to take up the topic and prolong it in the media. So that's the difficulty. That's what we're working on at the moment. But you can tell a cool story. We're doing that with us. When you've been playing in the women's league since the district league and you want to be in the Champions League in five years, you're there from day one and you sort of follow a team from the beginning to the end. And that is what a fan base will always thank the company for. So the fans who really watch, we have a few crazy ones who are really always there. **If you're there as a sponsor from the beginning, you have such loyalty and you're so authentically and credibly connected to the community that it makes sense.** So the story has to be right. And Adesso, for example, does that as a partner. It's a company based in Dortmund. And they tell this story right from the start. That's just really cool.

Is it perhaps simply a market that has not yet been exploited? The market, women's football?

Women's football is simply a market that is not yet exhausted. I think it just needs time to develop and become even bigger than it maybe already is. But like all other issues, it will nestle somewhere, maybe reach the niche, any niche. **All football fans will never watch women's football because the classic football fan is still the beer-drinking man who, as stupid as it sounds, likes to watch football but still has a very blunt and simple image of women's football.** But I think you just have to put more creativity into it, then it will settle down somewhere and have its justification for being there.

Do you have any other comments on sponsorship in women's football?

Those who have created access to the team, who have highlighted the relevance of women's football, who have simply given women's football more visibility. I think we do that really well in our club. We now have over 50,000 followers who follow a national team. We do six-figure sponsorship deals with a team that plays in the Bundesliga or the Bezirksliga. That's insane. So when we roll that out, it's already crazy. And it's just about the relevance of the issue and that has a lot of charisma. And if you expand that even further and say, okay, we're pushing the issue, there's definitely potential there. **You just have to make the topic more and more visible, bring it into the media and activate it.** You definitely have to believe in the topic.

Yes, that's true, that's really true. But so far the chances are quite good that the popularity will definitely increase.

Interview Expert 5

Can you tell me about your experience in sports sponsorship related to soccer, how long have you been in it?

Well, first of all, I grew up with soccer and played professionally myself for a few years, so I got to know the business from the pitch. After graduating, I moved to a sponsorship agency where we worked on classic topics such as activating the DFB premium partnerships for Commerzbank. There, I came into contact with the topic of sports sponsorship from a practical perspective and it has accompanied me throughout my career, where I am now working in this area at the club since 2019. There I'm responsible for hospitality, marketing, etc., so that we end up with the best possible team.

What do you think has contributed to why women's soccer has gained popularity in recent years?

From my point of view, there are two main reasons for this. **First, the game itself has improved significantly.** In the past, when I worked in Frankfurt, I regularly watched FSV Frankfurt games and could see very clearly how much the quality of women's soccer has risen. **In terms of quality, there has simply been an extreme leap forward and you can see that conditions have become and are becoming much more professional overall.** VfL Wolfsburg, for example, was one of the clubs that invested a lot of money to give women an infrastructure and turn them into professionals. Just like with the men, with the help of physiotherapists, etc. **The conditions have just become incredibly professional compared to a few years ago, and of course that is reflected in the quality of the game, which has improved significantly.** You could also see that in the final of the last European Championship, where the Germans only narrowly failed. These are games that you can watch in their entirety and really enjoy, and attractive soccer is being played. The other thing that I think is also fueling this issue is the general trend toward strong female personalities and that people are now paying much more attention to that. Especially in our club. The question that many are asking is how to break up the male domain that it still is at the moment to a certain extent. For example, we have four women out of 7 supervisory board members, so we're already trying to implement that accordingly. And I think this general social trend also contributes to the fact that the topic of women's soccer has received an enormous push and will probably receive even more. One example that is also very present

at the moment is Viktoria Berlin, who have given themselves a new project. That, too, with the corresponding well-known heads behind it, which then of course also contributes to the fact that women's soccer in Germany, and of course all the professional leagues like the French and English ones, are becoming more and more popular: The professionalization of the sport and accordingly the social development, which totally supports this, is the basis for the development.

Why do you think companies should invest or not invest in women's soccer?

Companies that still serve a supposedly old stereotype should not invest. A very striking example would be: Why would a kitchen manufacturer feel more comfortable with a women's soccer club than a men's soccer club. Especially since it's often the case that if you look at the demographics and the audience for women's soccer, it's often men, and mostly older men. That will have changed somewhat now as a result of the development I've described. But why should you get involved in women's soccer? **Because I think it's an area that definitely needs to be promoted.** With Levis, for example, we have a partner that explicitly promotes women and women's soccer. Levis also sees it as its task to support not only men's soccer but also women's soccer. The promotion of young talent in the men's sector should also take place in the women's sector. That's why financial resources are needed and why companies that simply want to promote this sport and young girls should get involved. **Finally, there is also the commercial perspective. You can still get good coverage and a good image these days if you back the right club and then support it accordingly.** So from my point of view, I can say that a partnership should be honest and not just serve clichés, and you should have a deep conviction to develop women's soccer. So, women's soccer can be a very good platform for many companies.

Are there any particular advantages to investing in women's soccer? Compared to men's soccer?

If you compare the sums that companies invest to be present in men's soccer and women's soccer, **one advantage is of course that the prices in women's soccer are still much lower.** Also, a very striking example, it is my impression that, for example, an advertising shoot with a footballer from FC Bayern Munich is certainly much more exhausting than with a woman from Eintracht Frankfurt. **It's just a different level of closeness, which I think is a big advantage in women's soccer.**

Have you noticed any differences between the motivations for investing in men's and women's soccer?

Ultimately, there are at least two directions. One is investment from companies that say it suits them to take advantage of the momentum and get involved in women's soccer **because it has a positive spin-off effect on their brand.** Then there are companies that say they really want to develop women's soccer and help get young girls playing soccer. So, there are different motivations, one does it a little bit more honestly than the other, but fundamentally I think it's also okay to take advantage of that momentum and use it to position yourself as a company in women's soccer.

Are there any possible challenges or obstacles to investing in women's soccer?

What I have just presented as a pro-argument is certainly also a con-argument. **Many structures are not yet as professional as in other sports or in men's soccer in particular.** Of course, it's still the case that the media presence of women's soccer is absolutely low. We still have many sports that are on TV much more often than women's soccer, for example. So, at the end of the day, women's soccer still has a comparatively low reach, but also a lack of or low professionalism across the board. At the top, on the other hand, the Bundesliga is already very well positioned with clubs like VfL Wolfsburg, Bayern Munich and Frankfurt. And then there's the question of whether women's soccer fits in. I'll come back to what I just said. In my opinion, there are a few companies that really don't fit in because they only fulfill clichés. Then you always have to ask yourself, does the company I work for fit this product, women's soccer? That is also an incredible challenge that companies have and should be aware of when it comes to sponsorship in women's soccer. In that respect, women's soccer is not yet comparable to ice hockey, handball, and certainly not men's soccer.

What steps do you think could be taken to develop and promote women's soccer?

I think other countries are already a bit ahead of us, especially when you see strong women's leagues being created in England or France. Also, big clubs like Paris or Lyon that invest a lot of money in women's soccer. **In Germany, this is not yet the case, although there are clubs like Eintracht Frankfurt, Bayern Munich and VfL Wolfsburg. So there is still a lot to do in that respect.** Then, of course, there's the issue of pay. The leagues in France or England are so strong because they are pure professional leagues. We don't have that in Germany yet. There are strong outliers upwards, but also downwards, so that teams that have to work on the side have to play against teams that are fully professional. So, there is still a lot of room for improvement, especially in terms of professionalism. I also think we need to increase the consumability of women's soccer. I can't think of a place to watch a women's soccer game right now. It might be on Magenta or a bit on Eurosport, but ultimately, it's not as present in the media as men's soccer or other sports. We still have a way to go there as well. Women's sports should simply get a lot

more space and attention, for example through soccer talk shows similar to men's soccer. If we can do that, then I think we're on the right track.

Do you think there are any particular strategies or approaches that companies might want to take if they want to invest in women's soccer?

I think the example of Viktoria Berlin is very successful because there are many strong women behind it who are also a positive face for companies. Companies that really get involved in this area can really do a lot for women's soccer with little money. From that point of view, I see the future rather positively. Companies should also ask themselves whether they would somehow rather be a partner of under 50 at a men's soccer club or one of 2/3 at a big women's soccer club. Even if the club only plays somewhere in the midfield of the first division, as a company you are still an important part and much more important for this club than the 10th co-sponsor at a men's soccer club.

We've already talked a little bit about the popularity of women's soccer and how it has increased in recent years, leading up to last year's European Championship. But still, women's soccer is not yet where it should be in terms of professionalism. What could be the reasons for that?

So, I think one original reason, which is in the nature of things, is that women's soccer of course can't be as dynamic and physical as men's soccer. Logically, there's a difference between the men's and women's Bundesliga games, and then maybe a lot of people turn off because they don't find it as attractive because the pace isn't as high as the men's. In my opinion, women's soccer will never reach the level that men's soccer is currently at. But if you professionalize the structures even more and give the women the opportunity to concentrate on nothing else and push the popularity of women's soccer via the media accordingly, there is a lot of potential. Nevertheless, one must not approach the matter naively and must be aware that, in the end, the attractiveness of the game or of a league is the most important thing. Another factor is whether it's a knockout game like the European Championship or just a Bundesliga match in front of 250 spectators. The latter is less exciting for the TV viewer. That's why I think the primary goal must be to professionalize the 1st Women's Bundesliga and have more teams that bring 5 to 7,000 people to the stadium. Female soccer stars can also play a role, because what is true for men's soccer can also be true for women's soccer. For example, if a Megan Rapinoe were to play in Germany, which she probably never will, the stadium would probably be full just because of that one person. There are a few possibilities, but no matter which one is activated, you probably have to be prepared that it will take years to actually reach your goal.

Would you say that sponsorship also plays a role in this, that this is being pushed?

Yes, absolutely. Ultimately, it's squaring the circle and the partner naturally pays more if the sponsor is visible. If the company is not visible, it pays less, but it can't be visible because then again, the club doesn't have the money to afford good players. So ultimately this can become a circle of angels, if you have good players, the person has a certain relevance and is then exciting for sponsors because they can communicate through their reach. In the same way, however, it can also be the opposite case, where a club can no longer get out of the village boundary and has no chance at all of acquiring major partners. That's why sponsorships have enormous relevance, especially in women's soccer, where TV money is very low, because you can't count on TV money at all because it's too small. Accordingly, sponsorship and financial investment are extremely important in order to create the infrastructure, improve the players and ultimately increase athletic performance.

Do you have any other comments still on this topic?

Well, my personal opinion is that I think it's good that the topic is also being pushed forward with us. We also have a women's team that plays in the third division and that is also developing to become more professional and has the goal of playing in the first division at some point, because this ambition has been awakened to compete with the best. It's in a really long process, of course, and the head start that men's soccer has built up over decades is not something that women's football can catch up with or compensate for in just a few years. However, if we look back at the last 10 years, we can see what has already happened, including significant improvements with the creation of a national league with professional teams and a very good women's national team. You can say that a lot is really happening now, and if you look further into the future, I think this area will become even stronger and the stadiums will be filled with 20,000 people and filled with enthusiasm. That's why I can only support this, because also in our area it's not only projecting everything on men's soccer, but also on women's soccer.

Interview Expert 6

How long have you been involved in sponsorship in the sports sector?

I've been with the sports manufacturer for about three years now on the sports marketing team, and as you may know, sports marketing generally takes care of all the sponsorship with athletes, clubs and federations. We focused mainly on athlete sponsorship, but back then we also invested in clubs, but now it's 90% or almost 100% athletes,

at least in Europe where I work now. So, I am employed in the Amsterdam quarters, and I take care of all the athletes in the European area. Of course, I've gone through different roles, sometimes with direct responsibility for certain markets like Germany, and so I've also had direct contact with female soccer players.

Then I would already dive right into the topic of women's soccer. what do you think has contributed to women's soccer gaining popularity in recent years?

I think the crucial thing is simply visibility. So I think the sport can only grow, and that generally applies to every sport, if it's visible, that is, if it's present in the media. That's not yet where it needs to be in women's soccer. I think the TV rights for the women's Bundesliga are with Magenta, it's not a mainstream medium and therefore still a niche. Nevertheless, as an interested fan, you have the opportunity to watch the games, which is already a step forward. I think the upswing comes mainly from England and the USA, and the USA is traditionally very popular anyway. In the last few years, England in particular has made a step forward there, mainly because of the TV rights, because it's then broadcast on free TV, or last year the big deal was announced that it will be the same in the next few years. That just makes it accessible to a lot of people. It inspires little girls, and they develop role models and then want to go the same way as their role models. that's the main reason, in my opinion. Plus, of course, if we're talking about Germany now, the success at the European championships last year, where the team made it to the finals. The sporting success also helps to make the topic more successful in the media, of course, but I think the visibility is the most important thing.

Why do you think companies should or shouldn't invest in women's soccer?

First of all, it depends on what kind of company you are, what your goals are, etc. I don't think sponsoring women's soccer is the right strategy or investment for everyone. I don't think sponsoring women's soccer is the right strategy or investment for everyone. I think you really have to think about where you want to go. Just because it's fashionable right now, I don't think it's the right thing to do. For us, it makes sense simply because we want to position ourselves as a brand co-gender. Our brand still has a bit of a problem that we're perceived as very male, so it helps when we sign more female athletes. That's just one of the reasons from our point of view. The second reason is that women's soccer is simply growing and becoming a business case, so it makes economic sense and it can also play in the media. Also in the media, where it's becoming more popular, not as much as men's soccer, but it continues to grow, and you're perceived as a brand. Then there are also some interesting female athletes who have interesting stories to tell and are relatively present on social media and create good content. With Laura Freigang, for example, we have someone who does that very well on Instagram, but especially also on TIK TOK, which of course also creates access for us to the younger target group. What I also find very interesting in women's soccer is that, compared to men's soccer, the social values that women's soccer conveys in certain things are much further along. One example would be the coming out, which doesn't yet exist in men's professional soccer and is no longer an issue in women's. I think men's soccer can still learn a lot from women's soccer in terms of openness and values. Of course, brands find topics like diversity, quality, etc. very exciting, and women's soccer is already much further along than men's soccer in this respect.

Did you notice any differences between the reasons for investing among men or among women?

No, not really for us. We just look at which athletes we need to achieve our goals and to fill our brand campaigns with interesting athletes. We apply the same criteria to women as we do to men. We look at both men's and women's soccer. We are not yet gender parity, but we are trying to achieve that. However, it's important to know that in some areas it's not the athletes that work better, but in those cases the brand ambassadors fit. But we're not necessarily guided by reach now, that's not a criterion for us, for us it's more about the values, the story and the activation.

Do you think there are any potential challenges or barriers to investing in women's soccer?

Personally, we haven't encountered any challenges directly. If we take Laura Freigang as an example, she has a similar number of followers on social media as other male athletes. I can't think of any specific hurdles in women's soccer; for us, it always depends on the athlete. If the criteria don't fit, it doesn't matter whether it's a man or a woman.

What criteria do you have when you are looking for an athlete?

We have several areas. First, the athlete has to fit our values. There are simply athletes who fit our brand better than others. For us, the most important thing is to follow the path to success and not just show the end result. We want athletes who are willing to show all the hard work in public. The second pillar is performance, we have 3 different categories that we put athletes into - the best of the best, the best of the region and the best of the world. If we can't categorize them in some way, they fall through the cracks. Then, of course, we have defined some general goals, for example, our target group is 16- to 20-year-old team athletes, which means that we also want to have athletes who somehow appeal a bit to this group.

What do you think are perhaps steps that could be taken to develop or promote women's soccer?

Sponsorship definitely plays a role here. In many cases, the sponsor is the main source of income for female soccer players, which of course is in stark contrast to men's soccer. In men's soccer, the salary is by far the main source of income; what they get in one year at our club, they get in two weeks at the club. In women's soccer it's the other way around, we create mainly financial support. But that has to change, and I think it will. The growth of women's soccer means that the women will inevitably get more money. We sponsors can also give visibility to the players, as you could see in the example of Laura Freigang, who achieved greater reach through campaigns that required millions of dollars of investment, so that other brands wanted to work with her. Accordingly, sponsors can also help create visibility that the sport itself cannot yet create due to the fact that matches are only broadcast on streaming services.

Would you say that there are certain strategies or approaches that companies can take if they want to invest in women's soccer?

One strategy or approach could of course be to sign clubs that have same-sex models, i.e. have both a strong men's and women's team, Eintracht Frankfurt is here a good example. For us, the most important thing is to find athletes who fit our values, and that's how it should be with the clubs. In addition, the topic of young talent is interesting for us, i.e. we are looking for young players who can also become interesting for us in the future and thus also inspire the next generations. The brands in particular should also take a closer look at this.

Is it important for you to make the contracts, especially in the long term?

Yes, the goal is to find players that we can help from a young age and who will grow and get better with us. That's also in our mission statement: We make you better, so we want to help athletes reach a higher level. The best example of that is Trent Alexander Arnold, who we signed at the age of 16. He is now one of the best right defenders in the world. In any case, it's important to take a long-term path together and grow together, because we've also found that athletes are then more willing to represent the brand, because they then also feel more emotionally connected to the brand.

Finally, do you have any comments on the topic?

For us, it is important to promote women's soccer because we believe that women's soccer will grow in the future and be a serious and economic alternative to men's soccer. On the other hand, women's soccer has more interesting stories to tell. The most important thing is that TV stations pay more attention to women's soccer. That's the only way to inspire the next generations, but I think we're already on the right track.

Interview Expert 7

What is your experience in sports sponsorship, how long have you been working in this field?

In the meantime, it's been almost five/six years. I started at a relatively well-known sports marketing agency in Germany with a location in Mainz, where we marketed the football club. I was a trainee there before and was then taken on. In the first step, I did a lot of hospitality, and then also the regional partnerships. After that, I switched to another sports agency in motorsport, which is not quite as well known, but I think it is relatively well known in Germany, and I structured and built up the sponsorship together with a colleague. An agency did that before us, and we then brought it in-house and then I was responsible for it as a staff position under the management and then after two and a half years I went back to the agency in a slightly different role. Now I do a lot of consulting, structuring and conceptual design for bigger brands. And I work with the premium rights sales department to basically help brands enter the world of sport. Or to show that the topic of diversity and women is of course becoming more and more important. We have already had one/two offers for partnerships, different sports.

Then I would also go straight into the topic of women's football. What do you think has contributed to women's football gaining popularity in recent years?

On the one hand, I think the media institutions have taken up the issue much more. It plays a bigger role in the media, especially in the public broadcasters, but it is still not as important as it should be. In my opinion, however, it is much more important than it was ten years ago. I also believe that the sport itself has become much more attractive, purely in terms of football. And the youth work of the associations and clubs has also improved significantly. Above all, of course, there is the performance of the national team at the last two tournaments and the fact that we have the right players there, who of course are also somehow draught horses and present themselves well to the outside world, even if they don't play a major role in sport. In Frankfurt, with Laura Freigang, who has an extremely large number of followers on social media and simply generates attention there, it is something different than in men's football. But as I said, I think the drivers are the media institutions, the national team and now also regionally the individual clubs. 1. FC Köln, for example, has just broken the 30,000 marks in the women's football Bundesliga as a record number of spectators, which of course helps enormously.

In your opinion, what is the reason why women's football is not where it should be today, contrary to all assumptions about its increasing popularity?

I think that, for example, the issue of the media institutions is again a point. The kick-off times, for example, are also not well fixed. I think that at the next World Cup, the kick-off times will be spread throughout the day, which makes it difficult to follow the matches. This is often the case with tournaments on another continent, but with the men's team, at least they have made sure that the kick-off times somehow fit, that they are coherent and repeated. That's not the case with the women's team, which of course makes it difficult for the media to bring the broadcast to the fans and especially to reach the masses. And I think another point is that many people still don't know that the football played there is of a very high standard. Maybe that's simply because many people still have the outdated opinion that women's football is not at the level it is today. In the meantime, the women's football Bundesliga can definitely keep up technically with a third division, even with the second division.

Why do you think companies should invest or not invest in women's football?

They should definitely invest. If they invest, they are one of the first companies to join in and also show a presence.

Also, the target group in this area is extremely exciting. There are a lot of families, a lot of fans who are very involved, who are involved with football, even though it might not be that popular yet. I think the opportunity to get involved now is something you don't have in many other sports, apart from football. We just had a bigger client for women's cycling, which is also dominated by men. Women now also participate in the Tour de France or race on the same dates. But these are just a few parallels where you can see that you can achieve a lot when sponsors get involved. Women's football is a great opportunity for big companies to position themselves and reach a target group that might not otherwise be reached because football polarizes them.

Are there particular advantages of investing in women's football compared to men's football?

Yes, especially that you only have a few brands on the road and not, as in the men's Bundesliga, an average of 30 logos of different brands in the stadium. That is not yet the case in women's football. Of course, you have a smaller target group or a smaller audience, but you are much more present for less budget. It would definitely make a lot of sense for companies to develop something there directly. In addition, regional companies can get very involved, as you can see in the example of Eintracht Frankfurt, which has now also integrated the women's football department into the AG. These are steps that companies can take and that simply make a difference. In addition, companies can also act as first movers here, which means that the topic of diversity can be played out without window dressing.

I am also interested in the motivations for investing in football. Are there perhaps differences between men and women?

Yes, there are definitely differences. What I have heard so far, or from marketing decision-makers who have the different offers on the table. It is the case that the men's football Bundesliga is mainly reach-driven and partly preference-driven. Everything to do with women's football is more thoughtful, more strategic and driven by the perspective of long-term partnerships that will still have an impact on the brand in ten years' time. So, it's much more forward-looking. And yes, there are also some beautiful projects in women's football that are maybe a bit out of the ordinary, if you can put it that way. That's why the biggest difference is: reach vs. strategy.

Are there also challenges in sponsoring women's football?

Yes, the level of professionalism still needs to be raised a bit, especially in terms of marketing. I'm not just talking about the sporting area, but really purely about marketing. In every Bundesliga stadium there are managed stands, so it's easy for companies to advertise there. In the women's Bundesliga, it looks a bit different when you look at the pitches in the women's Bundesliga. But that's simply because there are no sponsors and therefore no money to expand it further. That simply means that as a sponsor you have to face this challenge, that you have to do a lot, that you have to get involved a lot and that you don't have the option of simply booking a 90-metre LED perimeter, as is the case now in the men's sector. In women's football, you have to enter into dialogue with the club to find out what measures you can implement. That's basically in marketing, where the decision-makers there make the appropriate decision. But the biggest challenge is certainly professionalism in marketing.

What steps do you think could be taken to develop or even promote women's football?

Things that are already being pushed, especially by the association, to get more support in the women's football club. To professionalize the national team and make it the flagship for women's football in Germany, to promote the women's football Bundesliga. Every club should create the sporting conditions so that women don't have to have a second job alongside football, which is actually unthinkable for men. You have to create the conditions that make the sport more attractive and at the same time create the same structures that exist in the men's Bundesliga. Eintracht Frankfurt is an example here, where the women's and men's teams are put on the same level. There, not only the sporting area is being expanded, but also the structural area is being designed in such a way that it is attractive for sponsors. In this way, sponsors in one's own club who previously only sponsored the men's teams can perhaps also be made aware of the women's offerings. I think these are a few points where you can start to create the attractiveness for companies to invest there.

Do you think that sponsorship can possibly push professionalism forward again?

Yes, absolutely, so at the end of the day, money is always the sticking point for many clubs. I believe that clubs like Frankfurt, Wolfsburg and Bayern Munich have different prerequisites than, for example, a club like SV Sand, which is perhaps very good in sport but then simply lags behind in terms of infrastructure because they don't have a big football club in the background. But the money that flows into sport always helps to develop sport if the right measures are taken. And in the first step, even amounts that are small sponsors in men's football probably help the biggest sponsors in women's football. From that point of view, I definitely believe that this money would help development if it is used in the right way.

Are there any particular strategies or approaches that you would recommend to companies, especially now, if they want to invest in women's football?

A long-term investment and regionally bound companies make sense. This means that Deutsche Bank, for example, would be an option for Eintracht Frankfurt. In other words, large regional companies that are based in the cities, that deal with the topic and can perhaps approach it differently than companies that only book media services. It should be a strategic partnership. I think you should get different departments on board, whether it's from the diversity department, maybe a human resources department or employer branding. That you build a partnership that is not just a classic sponsorship partnership with a logo on the chest or on a ribbon, but that it simply includes other activations in addition to the classic advertising material. I would definitely advise companies to get more involved and work with different agencies that already have experience with this. However, it is also important to avoid signing contracts that only run for one year in order to achieve short-term goals, but rather to set milestones for four, five to ten years in order to see long-term and effective successes.

Do you have any other comments on this topic? What issues are particularly important in women's football and have not yet been addressed?

From what I have seen so far, it will become more and more important, and it will also make a big leap. In the next few years, or maybe in the next ten years, women's football/women's sport will become much more important, even for companies where it is not yet. So I think it's a relatively good time to look ahead and companies should act relatively quickly now. And that's what we as an agency also say to many companies when we talk about women's football or women-specific sports strategies.

Perfect, then that's it and thanks again for the interview!

Interview Expert 8

What is your experience in sports sponsorship in football? How long have you been working in this field?

Yes, I am Lina, the founder and CEO of a sports sponsorship platform exclusively for women's sports. So in that sense, the focus is definitely on women. We founded the company in July 2021, so we've been founded for almost two years now, on the market for one and a half years. We then launched the first version of the platform in September 21, so to speak, the business idea dealing with that was much longer ago. So that's been the case since the end of 2019, that we really got to grips with the topic and then of course sharpened it further, networked more and more and then finally brought it to the market in concrete terms with the foundation. I have also been a football fan for a very long time. On our platform in women's football, we have not yet implemented sponsorship in such a concrete way, because things are very different in football when it comes to sponsorship. It's interesting to find out, because so far, we also wanted to bring teams or clubs onto the platform. But that's still a bit of a challenge, only because of transparency. On our platform, clubs or teams create a profile and describe transparently what their budget ideas are, what a certain sponsorship activity should cost. So, there is no complete fixed price, but simply a range from - to. And so far, it has turned out that this is a bit difficult, because then the big difference to the men becomes clear and they simply don't want to be so transparent.

I would then dive straight into the topic of women's football. What do you think has contributed to women's football gaining popularity in recent years?

On the one hand, there have been some scandals in men's football as well, especially morally, when you look at the funding of men's football. There was also a bit of uproar among the fans or clear signals that they would like to see other financiers. Then, of course, there was the big scandal with the Men's World Cup in Qatar, which was held in a place that was simply difficult from a human rights perspective. It also disrupted the course of the game by falling in a different time period. There are many scandals in this regard, which is also part of the second reason that men's football is also very money-oriented. And women's football is exactly the opposite. The women are even more accessible. It's much more about the sport, about this team feeling and not just about individual fighters who want to make a name for themselves. Women's football is simply closer, more familiar and also a bit more progressive. Especially through the European Championship, which was also broadcast, which is of course an

important point to create popularity in the first place. The fact that the women have come so far was of course a big boost in this area. You can also see in sponsoring and also in the companies that a rethinking is taking place. People have realised that there is still a lot of growth, a lot of opportunities in the women's sector, and this increased visibility now simply offers a lot of attractiveness for sponsors to get involved.

What could be the reason why women's football is not where it should be today, despite its growing popularity in recent years?

It simply has a lot to do with tradition. Men's football has a much longer tradition, especially at the level of official competitions. But what also plays a role are the general conditions. There aren't that many women who make it to the professional level because the promotion of young players isn't there and the perspective isn't there that you can make a living from football as a woman. If you take the first Bundesliga. Salaries range from €0 to €15,000 gross per month. If you put that in relation to the men, then of course those are salaries you can't necessarily live on. That is one aspect, for example, why it is difficult to attract so many women to football in the first place. Apart from that, there is also a lack of media coverage or the matches are broadcast at times when people are not necessarily sitting in front of the TV. In some cases, media coverage is not even possible because the pitches are not equipped with floodlights, so they cannot be televised. The media presence and visibility is simply not there in a way that can create that hype. That changed a bit last year with the European Championship, but also with the media showing more women's football. There are still a few positive stories and positive examples missing where we should build on this and also make sure that it is not only situational at an event like the European Championship or now the World Cup, but a bit more constant. And this of course brings us back to the question of marketing. Do you separate the women from the men and say we market the women alone, or do you also use the men's channels to a certain extent and present the women in this way? That's a bit of a question where I think every club should consider for itself what it wants to stand for. There is the prime example of Wolfsburg, where the women are clearly more successful than the men, but still don't have their own standing, their own branding, where the money that is taken in is still not evenly distributed, but I think the focus is on the men.

Why do you think a company should or should not invest in women's football?

Invest? Definitely. Because that also falls under the point of recognizing performance and appreciation. Women achieve just as much, train just as hard and often also have a job to finance their sport, which men don't necessarily have. That's why regeneration and the like often fall by the wayside. So it's about giving them the opportunity and, what is also very important, creating role models. When I think about young girls and women, they often don't have female role models because they simply don't exist, because they are not visible. Sport is simply a super important building block in society to socialize, to keep fit. And it starts very small. If you simply don't send the right signals and the image of society, which is also 50:50, then it would also be important for women to be present there. On the other hand, it is also interesting for companies because it conveys completely different values. I have already said that for men it is very much about success and money, and for women it is also about what they want to stand up for, for example gender equality. And also, to show that by noticing women's achievements just as much as men's. This closeness, that you come into much more contact with female athletes and can implement motivation and team building more easily. Sponsors can benefit from showing how the female players deal with successes and failures. I would say that the men probably have little time or no desire to do that. And that simply allows for completely different sponsorship activities. Apart from the classic logo on the jersey and TV coverage. The purchasing power is also predominantly with women everywhere, so 80%. Moreover, you can reach new target groups, and women are often the more attractive brand ambassadors through the advertising channels. That would also be one of the reasons why it is worthwhile to get into women's sports. Another point that comes to my mind is employer attractiveness when it comes to attracting female employees, especially in the IT sector or something. If you actually say that you are somehow exemplary and committed to women, then more women would be interested in the employer because they are also represented in a male domain. Yes, these are all aspects where I would say it's worth setting an example and trying it out because you can achieve a lot even with a small budget, and we're not talking millions here.

What are barriers to investing in women's football?

It might not be worth it if the business goal is to generate reach, because women's football doesn't have that reach yet. Otherwise, I don't see so many negative points there. I would say it's the classic reach comment that is often voiced by others. They say why should I invest in it if nobody sees this sponsorship.

Do you think that this is also the motive for men, that it is mainly about outreach and that the motives for women are simply different when it comes to this investment?

We are noticing more and more that companies see a different need in women's football. So it's also more about regionality and supporting clubs or female athletes in the vicinity to give something back to the region or to be an attractive employer in the region. That is also the motive when it comes to amateur sport, for example, and I would say that it also goes in the direction of women's sport. And with the men, it's more the idea that a

company can afford to invest here in order to be present. But the question is to what extent it actually fits the company. For example, there are female athletes who are very interested in sustainability and then companies become interesting to whom this is also important, and **it is not only about the financial aspect, but also about the personal match.**

What steps do you think can be taken to develop and promote women's football?

I would definitely like to see the general conditions change a bit. For example, that there is a minimum wage in the women's sector so that you don't necessarily have to work alongside football. Then, that the broadcasting times of the matches are at more attractive times. That something is done with regard to the coaching staff so that there are more female coaches. That there are more women as contact persons, for example, when it comes to topics that only concern women, such as the menstrual cycle, so that perhaps the training conditions can also be adapted. Of course, the framework conditions are also a bit lacking. It would be important to have more women in decision-making positions, because at least in many clubs the final decisions are still classically made by men. There is definitely a lack of diversity and perspectives in decision-making positions. But it is also up to the clubs to communicate this, e.g. to market it via social media. And therefore, it is also up to the clubs themselves to think about it: What can we offer in terms of sponsorship activities? What is the unique selling point of the team so that it is also interesting for companies to invest there?

Are there any particular strategies or approaches you would recommend to companies looking to invest in women's football?

For a sponsorship to be successful, it has to be activated to a certain degree. So if I just put some money in somewhere and then somehow expect a big jump in sales. That's why I think it's important to think about it concretely. What is the goal anyway? Reach? Social engagement? Employer attractiveness? Depending on that, the sponsorship should be more specifically targeted. So the more recruiting measures are taken, the more they should be communicated externally. I think it is important to first think about the strategy, what is the goal, what do I want to achieve with it, how do I want to implement it concretely and also how do I want to communicate it in different channels.

Do you have any comments on the issue of sponsorship in women's football? What else is important for you to say that has not yet been covered?

I think there is perhaps another critical issue on this point where I also think an open discussion is necessary. It is the question of marketing. Ultimately, it is about not making distinctions between the sexes. But until that happens, it is probably important to make a distinction here and then also talk about men's football. So when you talk about women's football, you should also include men's football. Otherwise, sometimes women feel belittled because of their gender and it's not about their sport and their performance. And I think maybe we should think a bit more about how to change it somehow. To the point that just the interest in the sport itself is there. But I also see that it takes time to get there and that's why we are glad that there is any attention at all in this area and that something is happening, and that energy and money is flowing into it.

Okay, great. Many, many thanks.

Interview Expert 9

Can you tell me about your experience in sports sponsorship? How long have you been in the sports industry?

Yes, I work in the media department, here at our club as the press officer for the women's Bundesliga team. So, I've been with the club full-time since 2016, but before that I always worked in the sports business in various internships and so on, and then also in 2014 here at the club, but in each case in this whole area of media and communication, but since 2016 I've also had the position of press officer for the women's Bundesliga team. And since then, I've been fighting to raise awareness, which has already happened.

What do you think has contributed to the fact that women's football has gained popularity, especially in recent years?

You mentioned the European Championship earlier, that was certainly a very important point last summer. Above all, at least here in Germany, because I would exclude other countries, because in England, France and Spain this boom is already there. Here in Germany, it has also reached us due to the good performance of the national team. Of course, we also had the advantage that the Corona era raised the status of the women's Bundesliga. That is to say, the moment when it was announced that the professional team would be allowed to continue playing and the status of **the Women's Bundesliga was recognized as a professional league alongside the third, second and first Bundesliga. That was certainly an important step in showing that women's football was becoming more professional and more recognized.** And then there was the fact that during the Corona period, the DFB put pressure on

Telekom to broadcast the matches live because spectators could not get to the stadiums. Before Corona, a maximum of two of the six matches were shown per matchday. With the reboot in the Corona era, all matches were shown, and this is now evident in the negotiation of the new TV contract that will be in place from the summer, where fortunately all matches will continue to be shown and will also be available on several channels.

What could be the reason that women's football, despite its growing popularity, is not yet where it should be?

I think it has a bit to do with the past or the history of football here in Germany. It was also the case that women's football was banned for many years. I think we are now in the 53rd year that women's football is allowed here in Germany. That is, of course, a time that must be made up for. While men's football has always been played and developed very, very quickly, we now must catch up a bit in women's football, and that is happening relatively quickly at the moment. But of course, such a development is not feasible from one moment to the next. You can't just flip a switch and suddenly everything is there. **You must make sure that the conditions for the players, but also for everyone else who works in this field, become more professional and that you get away from having to work on the side and that the players can do it professionally.** We're not talking about them earning millions. But they still have to earn enough to be able to do it professionally. We are still a bit behind here in Germany. In other countries, they are two, three or four years ahead of us. But I still believe that the current development over the last, let's say, 18 months is very positive and that we are on the right track.

Why do you think companies should invest or not invest in women's football?

There is actually no reason not to do it, but many reasons to do it, because right now we are always talking a lot about diversity and equality. From my point of view, that is the biggest point that shapes women's football or women's sport in general, because I think we should not always look only at women's football, but also at all other sports where women excel. Nowadays, it is simply time that men and women have the opportunity to practice sport as a passion and also as a profession. Of course, football is always the most likely example to be used because of its charisma. We saw that last night at the semi-final between Arsenal and Wolfsburg, where over 60,000 spectators came to the game, or last year at the Barcelona game with 91,000 spectators. Other sports simply can't keep up with that, not even the men. But basically, it's just right that companies should invest in women's sports and especially in women's football, because it's just fair to talk about gender equality as well.

Are there any particular advantages compared to men's football?

The advantage of women's football in the current situation is that it naturally has certain characteristics that are no longer attributed to men's football. So women's football is perceived as closer and more genuine, which is of course also due to the fact that in recent years there was not so much attention. You're not in these big stadiums and being watched all the time. That's why, with all this development and a certain professionalization, you also have to look at the other side of the coin, of course. That's why it's good if this closeness and this open and honest interaction continues, because that's no longer just attributed to men's football. It's really just a business, and that's certainly the case at many stages, but it also goes hand in hand with the fact that the attention is so enormous. Male players can't move around as freely as female players. They can walk around the city and some are certainly recognized, but of course the majority are not. In this respect, **women's football simply offers the opportunity to address other target groups, for example, and to set other themes.**

Are there differences between the investment motives of men and women?

The motives were basically those of the companies. If you look at it from the sponsors' point of view, it's because men's football naturally attracts much more attention. As a company, the first thing is to try to reach as many people as possible in some way with the resources you have. In this case, that would be men's football. But I think it is good, especially for small or medium-sized companies, to devote themselves to other sports, especially since men's football is already largely covered. So why not support other sports like women's football or smaller sports to reach a different target group.

Would more sponsorship money for women contribute to professionalisation?

Yes, definitely, because you have to say that for all the romanticism you have in sport, money is a very important factor. Because without money, professionalization simply doesn't work because many of the things we talk about when it comes to professional structures cost money. Be it the food, be it the travel to the games, be it the equipment. So, it always has something to do with money, and more sponsorship from small or medium-sized companies also gives us the opportunity to invest more in the structure, more in the players and so on. But without money it won't work.

Are there certain challenges or obstacles in women's football?

The biggest challenge in recent years is the path to acceptance in general. I think we have made a good step in society. There are still people who say we are not interested in women's football, and they are welcome to express

their opinion. The important thing is that, fortunately, these people are becoming fewer and fewer and those who still exist at least don't hinder the process of women's football. And it has to be said that many decision-makers in the big companies have also realized that ignoring women's sport is no longer in keeping with the times.

In your opinion, what measures could be taken to develop or also promote women's football?

There are very different approaches. The presence in the media is important. With the entry of DAZN into the Women's Bundesliga in the summer and the entry of Sky, who at least have the highlight rights, we certainly have a very good point. Without media presence, we have a problem. You first must give people the opportunity to see something so that interest is aroused. In that respect, we are on the right track. I think it was a very good decision by the broadcasters and the DFB to award the rights in this way. Apart from that, of course, we have to make sure that we inspire the sponsors that women's football has these attributes like authenticity, closeness, honesty and passion. If you highlight that and maybe also match the sponsors with the teams and players, the sponsors can see that this is a great area to invest in.

Do you think that this could also be because more women should be put in decision-making positions at club or company level, because I notice that myself, for example, when I talk to them. I mainly talked to men and only very rarely to women. Do you think that might simply be a point?

Yes, it is. Of course, that is one part of many points that lead to a better future for women in sport. With Anne Laufmann, we now have a female managing director. As a club, we are also in contact with the initiative "Football can do more", where precisely such points are also discussed. How do we get young women into this business? In my experience, it is often the case that there are still obstacles on the part of women who do not dare to apply. And that is exactly the point that needs to be dismantled as a challenge. I personally believe that gender should not play a role in the job. In the end, what matters is whether you have the skills or not. Accordingly, I personally can only encourage every person, and in this case of course women, to step on the gas now and join in. I think it was more difficult in the past, and in that sense, it was also a generational problem. But I think that in the current generation that is growing up, this problem will no longer be so extreme, whether it is a man or a woman. At least that is my hope.

What would you recommend to companies when they want to invest in women's football, what might make sense for them or how best to go about it?

It always depends a bit on the company. What kind of product or service do they want to promote? Yes, basically I would tell them, try it out and have fun with it. Maybe support a small start-up project with women's football. It doesn't always have to be a premium product. As I said, women's football or women's sport absolutely deserves to have sponsors to give them the opportunity to do it professionally. What reason is there not to invest in women? None. So that should be the answer to the question.

Do you have any comments on this topic that you think should be considered in women's football if you want to invest?

Actually, what we have had several times. I think there is no reason not to promote women's sport when you look at it as a whole. Women should also be given the opportunity to gain positions to make decisions. Above all, sponsors should invest in women's sports, whether it's football, tennis, cycling or winter sports, there should be no difference between men and women. Of course, the attention is different, maybe even in certain sports. Nevertheless, sponsors should get involved, have fun and develop a great sport like women's football.

Good, then I am done with my questions. Thank you very much!

You're welcome!

Interview Expert 10

What experience do you have in sports sponsorship? What experience do you have in football? How long have you been in this field?

I originally come from a sports manufacturer and started there as the first employee in 2015 and built up the European business with the European president as his assistant. In 2016, we joined the company with a club as a strategic partner. As an American company, our focus has always been very much on women's football, also for marketing reasons. Women's football has a different status in America than here in Germany. The American national team is still the world champion. Of course, that makes it easier for our sales representatives in America because they are not only sports suppliers, but also have a sporting influence and can be a bridge to Europe for the players. That is worth much more. That's why we have always been important and has always focused on women's football and tried to support the women of the club we support wherever possible, for example by sending players there. I always looked after the players and saw which players we could use and where we could get them. That's

how I got in touch with everyone in the department. Last season, when the team was relegated to the second Bundesliga, I helped externally to manage that and then we managed to get back up. That was because we as a club had difficulties getting German players, or the players we would have liked to have to make direct promotion more certain, we didn't get. So, we used our American network to get the players we needed to get back into the first division. We then had seven American players and managed to get back into the first division. I was still working in the background and since the summer I have been officially communicating as the head of women's football at the club.

Then I would jump straight into the topic of women's football. What do you think has contributed to the fact that women's football has gained popularity in recent years?

I think, on the one hand, of course, the last European Championship, which was a great success. On the other hand, I also think that the change that men's football has gone through in recent years. Everything has become more commercial, and the fan no longer feels so important. Prices have been raised; new tournament modes have been introduced. The change has really been all about money, and I think that has also helped for further development in women's football a little bit.

And the failures of the men? Because the World Cup in Qatar, for example, showed that quite clearly. The spectator numbers for the men in Germany were lower than for the women.

Of course, the Germans are always very extreme about such things. That must be said. Many other countries didn't care as much as Germany or other European countries do now. But yes, that definitely contributed to the success of the Women's World Cup.

What was decisive for the fact that women's football in Germany is still not where it should be today, contrary to the increasing polarization of women's football?

I think many people still have this negative image of women's football in the back of their minds. For example, when I invite people to our box who don't watch women's football, they are often surprised that the football that is played there is not as bad as they think. That is always the image that is burned into people's minds from the past, where they think that women can't play quality football. That's not the case at all anymore, women's football is becoming more and more athletic. If you compare the quality of today with 10-15 years ago, you see that it's a world apart! This is also true for men's football, but the leap is even bigger in women's football, and it is far from over. Because they will gradually try to create more and more the same conditions as in men's football. Of course, the level will rise steadily along the way. Once you have youth centers for all the Bundesliga clubs and youth work is really promoted. You have leagues at the younger girls' level that are also competitive. The development will grow steadily, and it must.

Why do you think companies should invest or not invest in women's football?

On the one hand, I think it can positively influence the image of a brand. For VW, for example, supporting the Wolfsburg women is one of the most important marketing tools. I think that can be very beneficial for any company. On the other hand, you also address a different target group than in men's football. Women's football also must develop in such a way that it doesn't try to copy everything from men's football but goes its own way. Maybe it should get more of an event character, e.g., along the lines of American sport, to create an event character with the whole family. I think some people still have the old prejudice that it's antisocial and that you can't go there with your family. But then that should be pushed with other shows and things.

Have you noticed different motivations for investing in men's and women's football?

Because of social and political pressures, companies feel compelled to promote women's football and women's sports. I think that is the motivation in most cases.

Does relevance also play a role in why companies might not yet want to invest directly in women's football? Because women's football might not yet have as much relevance as men's football? For example, the TV rights for the upcoming World Cup in Germany have not yet been awarded.

Yes, of course, for the World Cup you now must see who wants to buy the rights and broadcast women's football? Of course, it is important to find broadcasters for that. It's also difficult to put together any kind of pricing package for women when you don't yet know exactly when, how, where, who. then of course it's difficult and the more short-term it all becomes, the less revenue there is, which of course is also badly managed and, in my opinion, not very beneficial.

Are there any potential challenges or obstacles in women's football?

I think what is very difficult and what is not good for football, where the DFB definitely needs to think in a different direction, is the referees. Some of them are really very bad. I've rarely seen it like that, and it's the DFB's job to train the referees accordingly and maybe also think about video assistants. In the meantime, more money will be

distributed, and certain conditions should also follow, such as that a certain percentage must be invested in youth and infrastructure. In the end, the DAZN deal will give the teams much more TV revenue next season and they can dispose of it freely. I don't know if that is sustainable. Club XY, for example, could put all the money into two players, but whether that is sustainable is another question. But if you say that 30 per cent must be invested in youth football and infrastructure to develop it, that is definitely more sustainable for the club, but also for women's football.

What steps do you think could be taken to develop and promote women's football?

There must be a certain key that determines how the money comes in, but the DFB's guidelines are also important for the first division. These are the infrastructure and youth work. Then the DFB should offer more courses and train coaches. In the meantime, the B license for female coaches is no longer offered, but I don't quite understand why. If you look around the league, there are still too few female coaches. I think that's important - for us it's difficult to even find a woman for our coaching team. We definitely don't want to be male dominated, because it always needs a woman because she has a different approach. It doesn't matter whether it's in the men's or women's teams. But there are simply too few female coaches on the market. The courses for female referees and coaches should therefore be expanded.

Have various sponsorships brought you further success in recent years? Have you been able to achieve greater professionalism as a result?

Yes, with 28black we have a main sponsor for the first time who is directly committed for several years. Before, it was always annual contracts. This long-term contract is of course good and allows us to plan for the long term. We don't have to think about it again every year and invest more time to find someone. We are very happy about that and that is also the goal, to sign long-term contracts with the players. That is becoming more and more the case now if you look at the market. There are four-year contracts now, that didn't exist in women's football a few years ago. I see a very positive development.

Do you have any recommendations for companies that want to invest in women's football, what they should look out for?

Women's football is also characterized by the fact that the women are much closer to the fans and sponsors. They are much more grateful and have the desire to do things and make things happen. I have also worked in men's football and when I had a photo shoot with the men were usually not that interested and hardly had time because they had to deal with thousands of sponsors. The women, on the other hand, are happy to be asked and would do it for free, just because they want to, are happy and feel honored. That is definitely something that can be positive for the companies. I don't know if in ten years it won't be the same as it is for men, you just must keep an eye on the development.

Exactly, over-commercialization is a difficult issue, especially from the fans' side.

Yes, exactly. Due to the success at the European Championship, we are already noticing more and more that the women are also demanding more.

Yes, of course, they also want equal rights. Somehow it doesn't work without money. Do you have any comments on sponsorship in women's football? What role could it play?

No, not necessarily, the most important things have already been mentioned.

Okay, thank you very much.

You're welcome!

Transcripts Fans

Interviews Fans Coding Scheme:

Perceived positivity by fans	Enhanced quality increasing attractiveness	Bad accessibility as a barrier to watch it	Growing interest in women's football among fans
Prejudices still influencing the fans	Sponsorships for further development	Average recognition of sponsorships among fans	Major, German firms as sponsors

Interview Fan1

Can you tell me about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?

I have been playing football myself for over 8 years at my home club. It became my passion early on and I dedicated a lot of time to it, especially when I was young. I spent a lot of time on the pitch myself or watching the Bundesliga at the weekends. I watch all kinds of football matches as often as possible, be it the men's or women's Bundesliga or the Champions League. And when the big tournaments are coming up, I watch those too, of course. It's always a very nice feeling to be with my friends and watch these matches together.

Do you watch more women's or men's football?

I would say it's balanced. I like to watch the top matches of the Bundesliga and the Premier League because they are of a very high standard. Meanwhile, I also follow the Women's Champions League much more because it's on DAZN and I have a DAZN subscription anyway, mainly because of the men's football. The Women's Champions League is a lot of fun because you can see the growing quality of women's football. In the meantime, I think you can hardly see a difference to men's football, at least in terms of quality. By the way, I also followed the last European Championship in England very closely, which was a great success for our women's team, even though we lost narrowly in the final, the team delivered a really great tournament.

Is there a reason why you watch more men's or women's football?

I think it's because of the broadcasting rights at the moment. First of all, it's harder to watch the women's Bundesliga because it's only on Magenta. But that will change next season because DAZN got the broadcasting rights, and then I will definitely watch the Women's Bundesliga more often. I think there is another problem in society. When I watch football with friends, they rarely consider watching the women's game as well because many people still have prejudices.

Do you know of any companies that sponsor women's football? If so, what do you think of them?

From time to time I recognize some sponsors or at least they stay in my mind. However, I would say that I don't actively notice them, but rather passively remember them, especially larger sponsors. However, I couldn't name many sponsors now, neither men nor women. I think it's good when companies sponsor women's football in particular, because it certainly raises awareness and professionalism. At the end of the day, everything depends on money, and the more money a club has at its disposal, the more professional it can be. I just don't want it to be as extremely commercialized in women's football as it is in men's football.

What do you think about companies sponsoring women's football teams or events? Do you think this is important? And why?

As I mentioned earlier, I think sponsorship is important for clubs. Not only does it support the players and teams, but it also helps to establish women's football as a professional sport and give it more exposure, which it definitely deserves. Also, I feel that companies that invest in women's football are not only interested in a huge reach and money, but really want to help women's football fundamentally and in a much more honest way.

What do you think are the reasons for corporate sponsorship in women's football?

On the one hand, I think it is also a trend now to represent diversity and inclusion, which is definitely important and right! On the other hand, I think many companies also speculate on having financial success there in the long run. At the last European Cup we saw that it becomes more attractive and generates more attention, which is a positive potential for the future. I think that in women's football, well-intentioned reasons play a role in addition to the classic money-oriented reasons.

In your view, are there any particular challenges or opportunities in connection with sponsoring women's football?

Probably the prejudices that women's football has still very low quality and does not play a role are still there. I notice it myself that it has not yet gained much relevance and attractiveness in my circle of acquaintances despite the upswing of the European Championship. The European Championship was certainly a success because the national idea generally played a role there, whether in the women's or the men's game. The Bundesliga, on the

other hand, is not as exciting and is therefore not followed by many. Maybe that's because there are only a few teams and professionalism has not yet arrived everywhere. This can certainly make it difficult for companies to invest in women's football despite these risks. Nevertheless, I feel that women's football is much nicer and more familiar, which of course also creates opportunities for companies to present themselves differently.

How do you assess the upswing in women's football in recent years and what do you think is the reason for this?

Since I have been playing football for so long, I am very happy that there is finally an upswing! Even at amateur level, people invest so much time and passion, and it's even more the case with the professional teams. That this is finally being appreciated is very good! The women deserve this attention for the work they do every day.

Do you think that sports sponsorship in women's football should be expanded? Why or why not?

Yes, I think that sports sponsorship in women's football should be further developed. It is important to further promote women's football and give it the same opportunities as men's football. Sponsorship can provide funds to develop the sport and support the players. But as I said, you have to be careful that it doesn't become too commercial.

Have you ever bought a product or service because it was associated with a women's football team or event?

No, not that I know of. Maybe once unconsciously because I remembered a brand. Of course, I buy products from sports equipment companies like Adidas and Nike etc., but I also became aware of them through other campaigns.

Are there certain companies that you think should invest in sponsoring women's football? And why?

That is difficult to answer. For bigger companies that have enough money to invest in women's football anyway, it probably makes sense. It would also do their image good. I think it is also important that companies tend to organize themselves regionally. You can see that there is a lot of resentment in men's football when a club is bought up by Arab sheikhs. That simply doesn't go down well; more regional, German companies are much better regarded.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the topic of sponsorship in women's football?

No, not that I know of. I'm just looking forward to the coming developments and I'm curious to see to what extent the popularity will increase or whether it is/was just hype.

Interview Fan 2

First of all, can you tell me about your background and experience? For example, how often do you watch soccer matches on TV?

General background to soccer, I think since I'm four I play myself in the soccer club and have also since then just always remained connected with soccer, e.g. now also professionally. I watch soccer very regularly, so if I have time, I watch every Bundesliga conference on Saturdays, every Champions League game during the week, so there's a lot of time blocked for soccer and if any interesting game is near me, then I go to watch it in the stadium. I think last week on Tuesday Germany has played against Belgium in Cologne, which I have looked at the stadium. Two weeks ago, FC Köln women played against FC Bayern, which I have also looked live in the Frank-Krämer Stadium. When I was in Munich, I was also in the stadium about once a month and watched soccer there. And of course, if there are big events somewhere like the World Cup or the European Championship, I still watch them in their entirety.

Do you watch more women's or men's soccer?

Definitely more men's soccer, so I think women's soccer on TV I watch only if it is some top game or tournament. So, the Women's European Championship, which took place last year, which was such a huge success, the games I have of course watched live on TV. But otherwise, rather men's soccer. For example, I also go to watch men's soccer in the district league, which does not happen at all with women.

Is there a reason why you watch more men's soccer?

That's a good question. It's not meant to sound stupid, but I still find men's soccer more attractive than women's soccer, just in terms of speed and physicality. And of course, a men's soccer game is a bit bigger than a women's game is now. And with men's soccer, I still have a lot of this fan idea behind it, which I don't have with women's soccer. With women's soccer, it's more like watching objectively, without really getting excited.

Is it perhaps because women's soccer is not so accessible, especially on television?

That can also be true! I think women's soccer runs on Magenta if I remember correctly. But now, for example, the men's World Cup, there were also some games on Magenta, I had then specially got a Magenta access for it, I would not do that now with women's soccer.

Do you recognize when companies sponsor women's soccer and if so, how do you think about the sponsorship?

Definitely, so Schabenes you have just mentioned, of course, that stands out. They were never so well known to me before as a brand and if you hear it meanwhile, you can also assign it pretty accurately. I never got to know Schabenes through anything else, of course I've certainly seen them on the banners in Cologne, but the awareness of Schabenes with me comes exclusively through the advertising with the FC women. If I now compare that with other sponsors in women's soccer, I think Allianz is with the Bayern women's on the chest, but I also know them through the Arena and men's soccer. It hasn't had as big an impact on me as Schabenes. If you think about the women's Bundesliga, Flyeralarm is the name sponsor. I don't think they would be as present for me if they weren't the name sponsor of the Women's Bundesliga.

What do you think about companies sponsoring women's soccer? Do you think it's important or not? Please give reasons.

I find that important in any case, because women's soccer definitely has its reason to be there and offers so much potential for especially younger girls etc. to inspire them by the sport. For me you can women's soccer and men's soccer still absolutely not compare with each other since different values play a role in women's soccer. In men's soccer, it's all very much about monetary considerations. In women's soccer, you still have the feeling that everything is a bit more familiar, it's not so expensive and you can also afford to go there with the whole family, which is absolutely no longer the case in men's soccer. In addition, you're somehow closer to what's going on and you have a certain closeness. You can identify with it especially young girls, but maybe also young guys can even almost better than with today's men's soccer.

What do you think might be reasons for sponsorship in women's soccer?

I think awareness is less the intention, as it is perhaps in men's soccer, but I think you deal more with the brands in women's soccer than it is in men's soccer. I think you can also activate yourself as a brand in a completely different way, because I think women also have more desire for any campaigns together with the sponsors than is the case with men's soccer. So, you can create much more interactivity and expose completely different activation possibilities with the players and the club itself than perhaps in men's soccer. I think that's because the men are much more in the public eye and so maybe they come under criticism much more quickly and generally don't want to do it as much. And also, acceptance plays a big role. I think many have the feeling that men's soccer is only about money and wealth, while women's soccer is still about real values.

Do you think there are any particular challenges or opportunities in women's soccer associated with sponsorship?

I think one challenge is that this professionalism is not yet given and perhaps does not yet have the huge acceptance in society. I think the new Bundesliga season will have a start of a new rights period for the Bundesliga, in which Magenta and DAZN will once again share the main rights, ARD and ZDF will only have highlight rights, and Sport 1 will only have the Monday match, which means that there will again be many different channels on which women's soccer will be streamed. For DAZN and Telekom you first have to have access for, which means that it is also more difficult to follow all the games. But I think these are all companies that are raising the professionalism of women's soccer again, and I think the media revenues in general have risen by several million as a result of the rights period, which may also help to build up the entire structures more professionally. As a company, we will also be collecting official match data for the Women's Bundesliga from the new season onwards, which I think will also open up some new opportunities. Then there are also a few new stories to tell in women's soccer, as far as any historical topics are concerned. In men's soccer, there are now these Bundesliga match facts, with extended statistics, maybe all this will be possible in women's soccer at some point.

Women's soccer has been booming in recent years, especially with Euro 22, with England Germany in the final. what do you think could be the cause of this boom?

I think on the one hand also the poor performance of men's soccer, because so many people were totally unhappy about it, and besides that you could also watch the women's European Championship very well. And you must be honest, the women did a good job with all the trappings and generated a lot of attention with Alexandra Popp, who sat at the press conference with her mustache. I think that's why women's soccer has received an extreme boost. You also must be honest and say that the German women were already successful between 2000 and 2010, and they won almost every World Cup or European Championship but still never got the big attention they deserved until EURO 2022. Here, social media also plays a very big and important role.

Do you think sports sponsorship should increase in women's soccer? Why or why not?

I definitely think that this should increase. Especially now through the media coverage that there is now, and it also offers more opportunities for new companies to place themselves in it, since you do not need such a big budget. I'm still curious, I think the name sponsor Flyeralarm runs out at the end of this season, let's see if there will somehow be a new name sponsor for the women's Bundesliga then. Yes, in general it should definitely increase.

Could this perhaps also contribute to professionalism?

Yes, definitely, maybe it will also help to strengthen the balance of the league a bit, because at the moment it's either Bayern or Wolfsburg doing the thing. **If there are more sponsors, then maybe also smaller clubs have the chance to set themselves up more professionally** and also the players in the smaller clubs don't have to pursue a full-time job on the side, which would then also contribute to professionalism. You could also promote the youth perhaps even more targeted without having to spend directly all the money and thus has a basis to then also build the professional structures in the youth.

Would it then also be more attractive for you to watch the Women's Bundesliga if there are also more teams that are professionally positioned than just two/three top teams?

Yes definitely. So, if I now compare the women's Champions League games that ran on DAZN, then only play teams that are professionally set up and is then also really fun to watch and then comes much closer to the men's soccer. If such a level would be created at some point in the Bundesliga, I think then you sell out not only in international competitions men's stadiums, but also with the women. That would then also be such approaches, whereby I would then also look at the women's soccer more.

Have you ever used products or services because they were associated with a woman's soccer team?

No, I don't think so. So, products from Schaeffens, for example, are out of the question for me.

But would you notice an increase in any brands sponsoring the women's team?

Yes, but that in any case!

Do you think that there should be certain brands that should invest in sponsoring women's soccer? Schaeffens is mainly known for its cosmetic products, should there be more brands that sponsor women's products in women's soccer, or should men's sponsors be transferred to women's soccer?

If I take a look at our region here now, Telekom, for example, would come directly to mind. I don't understand why they don't do more in women's soccer, they would fit in quite well from my point of view. But I could also imagine DHL or something similar. It should already be companies that would have to be relatively attractive. **Large, German companies such as DHL, Telekom or also car manufacturers like VW, which would sponsor at the cup, also all fit well.**

So, it doesn't have to be companies that only sell women's products?

No, it doesn't have to be at all, because in women's soccer there are clearly a lot of families, but also a lot of men, young and old, everyone goes to watch it. Sure, you can say that, for example, Nivea or L'Oreal etc. could also do a lot more, but **I wouldn't relate the sponsors now only to the cosmetics industry.**

So, you have any other comments or suggestions in general on the topic in women's soccer?

I think it's particularly important to pursue long-term, sustainable strategies. It doesn't make sense to get into women's soccer for one season and then get out again; it should be a long-term strategy. It's no use just jumping on the hype for a short time and then ultimately not supporting the women's team effectively. I think it also helps more if, in addition to sponsoring a team, you also have more exchanges with individual players and try to find further ways of activating them, for example on social media channels. I think these are important factors for successful sponsorship in women's football.

Interview Fan 3

Can you tell me something about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?

I used to play football myself, at SV Plittersdorf, a small village club, and then came relatively early to regular football, which I now actively follow. Originally through my father, that's why I've been a fan of 1. FC Köln since I was little and I actually watch every game that's on somehow from FC Köln, so basically every weekend. but I also like to watch the Champions League or the DFB Cup or the European League during the week when it's on. I really enjoy watching all the different games and I also enjoy watching games with friends.

Do you watch more women's or men's football?

For a long time, I only followed men's football because women's football was more of a fringe topic for me. But now, especially with the Corona era and the increased attention through social media, that has changed. Now there are also women's football matches that I really enjoy watching. Especially when it comes to going to the stadium, I like going to the women's games because the prices are much lower than the men's and they still play attractive football. But I've also been watching women's football more often lately, now with the Women's Champions League, where VFL Wolfsburg is also in the semi-finals. They're playing Arsenal on Sunday, if I remember correctly.

Is there a reason why you watch more women's football now?

For one thing, if you want to go to the stadium, it's easier to get tickets than in men's football. Meanwhile, I really enjoy following women's football and find it very interesting. However, it is a pity that women's football is still not as accessible as men's football and therefore it is more difficult to consume it. However, there are ways to consume women's football if you really want to, which for me is a good step in the right direction.

Is it perhaps also because it has become more popular?

Yes, that's right! Especially in social media, women's football has been pushed enormously. Also, there are now streaming platforms where it is at least offered. Before, you could only watch Youtube livestreams, but with the new sources it's getting better, even if it's unfortunately not yet as far as it should be.

Do you recognise companies that sponsor women's football and if so, what do you think of such companies?

Yes, definitely. Adidas and Nike are also sponsors of their sportswear, and Schaeffler is of course the main sponsor of the women of FC Köln. Those are the ones that come directly to my mind. I definitely think it's super good, especially Adidas and Nike. For example, I gave my girlfriend a 1. FC Köln jersey for Christmas last year.

What do you think about corporate sponsorship of women's football? Is it important for you or not?

Yes, sponsorships of women's football are definitely important. On the one hand, it shows how important women's football really is when big companies are behind it and sponsor the whole thing, which just shows the relevance of the whole thing. If there was no sponsor, for example, I think that would be a decision against women's football. On the other hand, I think there are many advantages for the companies. They can address a completely different target group and show that diversity is important to them and send a signal that women's football is just as important as men's football.

What do you think could be a reason why companies sponsor women's football?

Yes, for one thing the slightly different target group they can reach with it, because the audience for women's football, as I have experienced it myself live in the stadium, is a bit different from classic men's football. The atmosphere is much friendlier and more familiar than with the men in the stadium. On the other hand, companies can also improve their image if they invest in women's football and the positive values are transferred to the brand. I believe that women's football really has great potential and that its popularity will certainly increase. That is why I think it is important and right for companies to invest in this area.

Could this possibly also increase professionalism if companies then invest in football?

Yes, definitely, especially through the academies of the respective clubs. If they have more money available, they can of course expand their academies and also promote young talents, and that is of course the basic building block for a more professional women's football.

Are there any challenges in connection with sponsorship in women's football? If so, can you tell me about it?

Yes, the revenue aspect plays a role here. Financing all these sponsorship activities is more difficult in women's football than in men's football because less revenue is generated than in men's football. Currently, the visibility of women's football is still lower despite its growing popularity. And I still see that as a problem.

Do you think the quality or attractiveness of women's football has increased?

I remember when I used to watch a match, I always thought it looked more like an amateur kick, and unfortunately a lot of people still see it that way nowadays. Today it's completely different, not only the World Cup or European Championship at international level with the national teams. But also the Champions League and the Bundesliga have gained enormously in quality and that's why it's really fun to watch now.

That is also one reason why the upswing in women's football has become so enormous in recent years. Are there other reasons as well?

I think that is one of the main reasons why the recovery has become stronger, because football lives through its fans and the public who watch and actively support it. When it becomes more attractive, that also leads to more spectators watching the game, which in turn increases the popularity and thus everything else.

Do you think that sports sponsorship in women's football should be expanded? why or why not?

Yes, definitely, I think that should definitely be increased. Maybe I should come back to the other points. It creates more visibility for women's football when you hear that big companies are also behind women's football and invest there and also actively promote it. That increases all other aspects of women's football, such as attractiveness, popularity and infrastructure.

Have you ever bought a product or service because it was associated with women's football?

Directly, I would only say the football jersey I bought. I have one from 1. FC Köln and one from the German national team, and that is directly related to women's football. I would definitely buy one again in the future.

Is it different for you in men's football, or do you just buy the jerseys for both?

Yes, exactly, I have not yet consciously bought a pure product directly from a sponsor. In general, I don't really buy from active advertising that I see but do my own research. Neither in men's nor women's football have I actively bought anything.

Are there certain companies that you think should invest in sponsoring women's football?

I can't think of any specific companies now, but I would think it would be great if the clubs that also have an active women's football team would invest more actively here and perhaps include sponsorship contracts that go hand in hand with men's football in their contract with the women's team. that would help the club grow as a whole, so to speak. In this way, people would not only associate the club with the men's team, but also with the women's team. If that succeeded, the issue would be brought further to the fore.

Do you think there should be more companies selling women's products or more companies with unisex products?

No, I would definitely say unisex, because I don't think women's football should be a football for women, with only women's products in the marketing. Instead, it should be kept unisex so that it appeals to everyone. Of course, there can be smaller sponsors that are also a niche for women or men, I think that's good too. But one should not insist on only including companies with women's products in the sponsorship.

Finally, do you have any comments on sponsorship in women's football? What is important to you from the fans' point of view, what should be considered so that sponsorship is authentic?

As I have just mentioned, the cooperation within the clubs, that they really make more active efforts for their women's team. I now see more often in the stadium of 1. FC Köln that women's football is also actively addressed and reported about among the fans. The clubs could also activate their fans more and convince them to support their women's team in the form of free tickets to create general awareness. Because I think a lot of people don't know now that women's football is really good now, so just activating people for it could also do something for the popularity again. Whether they continue to follow women's football or not is secondary for now, first and foremost it should just raise awareness.

Interview Fan 4

Can you tell me a little about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?

I have been following the sport for many years and grew up playing football and have always had a passion for the game. I watch football as often as I can, usually several times a week watching the German Bundesliga and champions league.

Do you tend to watch women's or men's football?

I watch both men's and women's football, but I tend to watch more men's football because it gets more coverage and is more widely available. As I only have DAZN which luckily broadcast the women's champions league I'm able to watch it times to times. The German Bundesliga which is only broadcasted on magenta I can't watch since I don't have access to magenta.

Is there a reason why you watch more men's or women's football?

It's definitely a question of availability and awareness. It is harder to have access to women's football and I wouldn't subscribe to a streaming platform just for women's football. I also watch a lot of football with friends who still consider that the quality is low and that it is not fun to watch it.

Do you recognise companies that sponsor women's football? If so, what do you think about them?

Sometimes I recognize companies that sponsor women's football and I think it's great that they support the growth of the sport. But mostly I only notice the big sponsors like the shirt sponsor and not the smaller companies. VW for VFL Wolfsburg, Allianz for FC Bayern or Schaeffler for 1. FC Köln are the main sponsors I would think of.

Do you think it is important that companies sponsor women's football? And why?

I think it is important for companies to sponsor women's football because it helps to raise awareness and support women's football. It also gives female athletes the opportunity to develop their skills and compete at a high level. Especially the professionalism in the German Bundesliga is not that high at the moment, which could definitely be improved by more sponsorship. Women's football has had to fight a lot of prejudice in recent years and deserves to get more attention from companies because it can develop further and become more attractive.

What do you think are the reasons for corporate sponsorships of women's football?

I would say brand presence, social responsibility and supporting gender equality are the main reasons. Unfortunately, there are definitely some companies that only sponsor the sport because it is a trend now, but I would prefer that they sponsor women's football in the long term and are willing to take the sport forward.

In your opinion, are there any particular challenges or opportunities associated with sponsoring women's football?

One challenge in promoting women's football in Germany is the lack of attention and coverage compared to men's football. I can see it myself, I don't watch it much because the broadcasts are poor. In England, for example, it is broadcast on free-to-air television and therefore has much more attention and appeal. Also, women's football has to deal with many prejudices, such as poor quality. It has improved in recent years, but apart from some very good games in the Champions League, the quality is still not comparable to men's football. At least that is what I myself and many of my friends with whom I watch football perceive. Many still prefer to watch a men's game than a women's game.

What is your opinion on the rise of women's football in recent years and what do you think is the reason for this?

I think the rise of women's football in recent years is due to the increased interest in women's equality in general. No matter in which field, the interest in women has increased. And it's the same in women's football. I think social media also plays a role here, because I consumed a lot of women's football through social media, especially during the European Championship last year. They attracted a lot of attention through a lot of funny actions, which raised awareness a lot. And of course the quality has improved and it's more fun to watch now.

Do you think that sports sponsorship in women's football should increase? Why or why not?

I believe that sports sponsorship in women's football should be expanded because it contributes to the growth and development of the sport and provides more opportunities for female athletes. The money is needed to make the sport more professional and therefore more attractive. I like to watch the Champions League because the teams that play there are professional and at a high level. But if you look at the German Bundesliga, where some teams are not yet fully professional, you realise that the quality is not that high and it's not much fun to watch. But I don't want women's football to become as commercialised as men's football already is. So a good compromise has to be found between investing more money but not over-commercialising.

Have you ever bought a product or service because it was associated with a women's football team or event?

Yes, I have! I think that some companies influence me unconsciously, because I have them in the back of my mind when I make buying decisions. I also bought the jersey of the last women's national team to support them.

Are there any particular brands that you think should invest in sponsorship of women's football? And why?

I think any brand that values diversity and inclusion should invest in sponsoring women's football. Companies like Telekom, for example, could get more involved in women's football. This way, they not only support the growth of the sport, but also show their commitment to social responsibility and equality. Besides, old, German companies are usually perceived as conservative. By investing in women's football, they could break this perception and not only advance themselves but also women's football.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the topic of sponsorship in women's football?

From the fans' point of view, I would say that it is important that the companies that sponsor in women's football do it for authentic and honest reasons, otherwise the fans would perceive them as negative. The fans have a big influence on the sport, especially here in Germany, because the fan culture is very big. So they should better invest for reasons that advance women's football instead of just making money.

Can you tell me something about your background and experience with (women's) soccer? Do you watch soccer, if so how often?

I cannot count since I come from a soccer family, and I was with 4 or 5 years as the first time at the soccer. Since then, I have regularly gone irregularly, have experienced training sessions not actively, but passively. Was always also present at games and match days and therefore I cannot count. First it was voluntary and at some point, the whole thing has become professional. The proximity to direct clubs has arisen in the last five years. That is then again from another point of view that one can say backgrounds, insights and things how one can change what. Those were the first steps for me. I definitely watch more men's soccer, but that's because, for example, the dates are so stupid that I very rarely get to women's soccer. They either play far away or on the same day, so it doesn't work out. Otherwise, if it works, then I'll be happy to go there sometimes.

What about television? Do you watch women's soccer there or on social media?

Yes, especially when the games are streamed, for example from FC Köln, but also of course national / international when the competitions and tournaments are on. I watch that then in any case.

Is there a difference when it's streamed? Do you watch more women's or men's soccer?

I would almost say it's also more men's soccer. That alone is due to the fact that there are more teams and Bundesliga match days. With the women, there are simply fewer. That would be the logical explanation for me. Otherwise, I watch the big events or even smaller events.

If women's soccer was shown more on TV, would they watch it more often?

Clearly yes. In women's soccer, unfortunately, you have to look for it. If you look for it, you'll find it, but if you want to reach people fundamentally, it simply has to be more accessible.

Do you recognize companies that sponsor women's soccer and if so, what do you think about it?

Schaebens is very well known especially for all of us now in Cologne, but even before that they were already known. Schaebens is a well-known, traditional brand, which one simply because of that already perceives. If I had to name 5 others now, I would not be able to do so. Sure, you recognize other partners such as Gaffel by the logo but also here in the stadium or special jerseys I could not name any sponsors directly. For me personally, the sponsors rather rush past you and therefore I do not perceive them strongly. So in fact they are not really present for me. Of course, Rewe for FC Köln or VW for VfL Wolfsburg, is perceived across the board. Beyond that, however, I can't name any other sponsors, whether in the stadium or on the jersey.

What do you think about companies sponsoring women's soccer or women's soccer events in particular? Do you think this is important? If yes or if no, why?

I think it's immensely important because it clearly spreads a lot more messages, the sport is much more broadly based and is also carried further into the Federal Republic. Through international tournaments there is already a great polarity, but you also notice very quickly that afterwards the interest is flattening again. If, for example, you have a few match days that don't go so well, then you can see directly from the spectator numbers that the support is not there. Just there, sponsors should do immensely important work to subsidize such a thing, for example, with raffles, promotions and perimeter advertising, so that the stadiums are filled and the teams thus receive support.

What do you think could be the reasons why companies are now also sponsoring women's soccer?

After all, there is nothing, if you look at it from the other side, that companies would leave out. They are always looking for new ways. And precisely because of the upswing and the immensely positive image in women's soccer - there are no riots, there are many peaceful family celebrations, there is a completely different atmosphere. So, there are no riots or anti-competitive fan scenes to be seen. There is simply nothing like that in women's soccer, and that is certainly one of the reasons why the whole field and environment is becoming more attractive. It is an immense range and that is also a completely different embodiment and charisma. It is much more personal - there is no high-level super player image like the men, but it is simply much more familiar in women's soccer. You somehow have the feeling that the players are not yet so aloof.

In your opinion, are there any particular challenges or also opportunities in connection with sponsoring women's soccer?

So, the particular challenge is of course to reach people, but you generally have that in this day and age because of the multiple channels. There have never been as many communication channels as there are at the moment. The opportunities are definitely there since there is a gap to fill. However, you also must find people who are interested in it. You can shake people up a bit, but it's difficult to keep the interest high if it doesn't arouse such a high interest. But there are also advantages in women's soccer, as already mentioned, in that there is a completely different charm and character behind it. The focus on sympathy and the interpersonal aspects makes a big difference.

Do you think that this has also contributed to the upswing in women's soccer? Women's soccer has experienced a particular upswing in recent years. What do you think is responsible for this and what do you think about it?

On the one hand, you have to say quite clearly that the fan-free soccer stadiums at the Corona time also contributed to this. There was then accordingly also the boycott of the World Cup in Qatar, that was also certainly an issue. In any case, people were always looking for substitutes and wanted to support what was there. All of a sudden, the stadiums were also full, so there were more spectators than usual here in Cologne for the first women's team and even for the second women's team. Of course, this was also due to the fact that, as already mentioned, it offered a more friendly, family-like environment. But that's exactly what is transmitted and can now also be seen quite clearly in the big stadiums. In addition, attractive soccer was also played, which no longer had anything to do with the origins. There are now grown professional footballer or ex-footballer, who have now become coaches, who themselves have played tournaments at a very high level and have also won. The degree of this professionalism has contributed to the fact that it has become so attractive.

Do you think that sports sponsorship in women's soccer should increase? yes or no?

I think it's definitely expandable. So, I think it's still very small-scale, and it's more important to consider whether to invest money in women's soccer than in other places where, for example, sponsors in men's soccer still try to get a place in the big stadium instead of women's matches. Here, they should rather take the risk to sponsor women's soccer even with few spectators and thus simply show presence.

Do you think, then, that it can still help women's soccer, especially from a financial perspective?

In any case, this creates new opportunities, such as taking partners along to training camps, which also allows you to finance other useful parts. I see more advantages than disadvantages.

Have they themselves ever bought a product or service because they associated it with the club's women's soccer team or events?

No, so there I really must deny. Schaeffens was already known to me before, which is of course doubly nice when you recognize the brand then again and get a certain confirmation. But no, because of sponsorships I have never bought a product.

Do you then think that maybe there should be any brands that should invest in women's soccer in particular?

So, from the equipment suppliers there are just tendered and long-term contracts, where everything is coordinated, so it is already more difficult there. But especially in the environment, for example, the organization of fan meetings, competitions or advertisements in the media, companies should increasingly support women's soccer. I think that's an important thing, and various brands would certainly come into question. That's not something I would rule out directly. For sure, big, branded companies should also focus on women's soccer.

In your opinion, should brands that are for women perhaps also increasingly enter into sponsorship of women's soccer? Or should classic brands that also sponsor men's soccer consider sponsoring women?

Brands that already sponsor men's soccer should also do so for women. I don't support these categorical women's ideas, because it's just too restrictive. Why should these brands not also be interesting for women? There are simply no taboos for me, so I would advocate that this division be opened.

Finally, do you have any further suggestions or proposals in general about sponsorship in women's soccer?

I find that difficult because then, of course, the big issue of commercialism comes up again from the fans' point of view. That's always the balance: everyone shouts that this is our club and must remain our club, which then makes it difficult with sponsorship. However, there are also clubs, such as Fortuna Köln, that are very regionally based and therefore have smaller partners. That's where I can't understand why smaller regional brands aren't also more attentive to women's soccer, since you could incorporate so many different things.

Interview Fan 6

Can you tell me a little bit about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?

I never really played football, sort of as a sport, of course as a hobby in the schoolyard or something. With my friends I played a bit, threw the ball around quite a lot, but I never really played in a club, apart from the last three years in high school where I played in a club in Germany, which was quite fun. And yeah, that's basically my playing background, which isn't very extensive. But I've been watching football most of my life, I think I started in 2002 with the World Cup Germany vs Brazil, that's when I started getting interested in it. And then when I

moved from England to Germany, I started watching more, and yes, since I was twelve or thirteen, I watch Chelsea and 1. FC Köln at least once a week. Yes, usually even more often. So I try to watch every single game of both clubs.

All right. Do you tend to watch more women's or men's football?

I actually came to it through men's football. And there, I would say in the last two or three years, I also got interested in women's football because I didn't know any leagues or teams before. Nowadays, you have access to all the platforms that offer the possibility to watch these games, and it was only in the last two or three years that I got interested in women's football as well.

Would you say if the access would be easier for you, you would watch more women's football?

Yes, one hundred percent. I think a good example of that is DAZN. I've had a DAZN subscription for a couple of years and I think at least Chelsea are also regularly on DAZN. Otherwise, it's quite hard for me to watch the games, mainly because I don't have access to too many different streaming platforms. So when it's on DAZN, it's much easier to watch. Other women's leagues, like the German Women's Bundesliga, are much harder to watch, I wouldn't even know where to watch the games, to be honest.

Do you recognize companies that sponsor women's football? And if so, what do you think about them?

Yes, to a certain extent. Obviously, bigger companies are now entering the sponsorship market in women's football. So I definitely take note of that. And I think it's very good and interesting that they invest in a sport that is trendy. On the one hand, of course, it's an opportunity for them, but on the other hand, I think it's very cool that they support something that needs more investment. I really like it when companies sponsor women's football clubs.

Do you think it is important that these companies sponsor women's football?

Yes, quite massively. It is very important that firms invest in women's football. You notice in almost every sport, but especially in football, that the success not only of a team but of a league goes hand in hand with the money and the inflow of money. An example of this is the Premier League, the men's premier league, which has benefited from massive investment in recent years, not only from a team perspective but also in terms of sponsorship. This improves the quality of the league in every way. Whether it's player development or investment in facilities, which in turn benefits the teams, platforms and service providers interested in showcasing the sport. I don't think women's football can definitely benefit from that, can it? So, the more money that comes in, the more professional the league becomes. Basically, the better that is, the better it is also for the teams to develop their players. The league as a whole becomes more professional and competitive, and it's much more interesting to watch. It's almost like a cycle. The more you invest, the better it gets, and that in turn leads to more investment. I think that would be very important.

What do you think are the reasons that firms are sponsoring in women's football?

I think it's an opportunity, to be honest. And it's an opportunity because women's football is on the rise, so the interest and attention is increasing. I think a really good example is the EURO 2022 that we saw recently, and the huge crowds show that there is a big scene that is interested in it and it just shows the potential. But here again the problem is that there is hardly any access. Basically, you also need more sponsorship money, for example. And with this money you can then also get many more spectators.

In your opinion, are there any particular challenges associated with sponsoring in women's football?

I think the biggest challenge is that when you sponsor football clubs, you have to make sure that it goes hand in hand with the development of the league or the team that you sponsor, right? Because when you sponsor a team you expect a return, for example you have to have a big audience for the sponsorship to make sense. But at the moment I definitely see limitations in terms of audience, and maybe that's because of access to viewing via streams, it could just be because of the quality of the league. So maybe it's not something that a lot of people are interested in, but yes, the biggest challenge is to get people to watch these games. So the sponsorship makes sense.

There was a rise of women's football in the recent years. What do you think of this and what are maybe the reasons for that?

I think the rise of women's football is really amazing, and I have noticed this trend as well. And with this trend, I have also watched a lot more women's football. For example, I often watch the Chelsea FC women's team, and also the Canadian women's national football team, which also won Olympic gold, which was really cool. But yeah, I think it's important not only for the sport as a whole, but also for the quality of the sport. I think it's a really cool trend, and I think it's important to understand that women's and men's sports are different, but they're both attractive in different ways. That's something I really like, right? I think it's really cool and important in that sense.

Do you think that sports sponsorships in women's football should increase? Why or why not?

I think, as I said, it's an opportunity. If you increase sponsorship, you simply benefit from the increasing spectator numbers and the increasing popularity of the sport.

Have you ever bought a product or service because it was associated with the women's football?

Not directly, I would say, but it's not like I wouldn't do it. So maybe not directly, like I said, but DAZN is an example, right? DAZN is a platform that offers a very wide range of sports, be it women's sports or men's sports. So that's really attractive to me. But I don't have something like direct merchandising yet. But I also have to say, to be fair, that I don't usually buy fan merchandise. Whether it's women's or men's football, I don't.

Are there certain brands that you think should invest in sponsoring women's football?

That is of course a difficult question. I think that any company that wants to be associated, for example, with women's empowerment, equality and everything related to sport and fashion could be a possible company. I also think that any company that represents the values of these values in women's sport could invest. It does not matter if it is a big or small company, but the bigger the better. Some companies that could benefit from sponsoring these leagues would be, for example, fashion companies, sportswear companies and maybe very commercial brands in general, for example in the media sector.

Okay, and do you think it should be more women-focused brands or does it matter?

I think it's important to understand who the audience of the league is. I think it should probably be a bit more women-focused, so not something that's primarily aimed at men, like a men-only cosmetics company or something, because I'm not sure it's mainly men who watch these leagues. Probably women-oriented companies would make more sense, but I wouldn't focus only on them, but rather on unisex companies.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the topic of sponsorship in women's football?

Not that I could think of right now.

All right, perfect. Thanks!

Interview Fan

Can you tell me a little bit about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?

I would say that I actually grew up with football, my father is a big football fan, so when I was a little kid I always watched football with him and I always went to the stadium with him. That's how I built a connection with football and that's why I watch football almost every week, mostly the Bundesliga and also the Champions League games.

Do you watch more women's or men's football?

I tend to watch more men's football simply because it's more accessible to the public. I watch less women's football, although I did watch more of the last European Championship.

Is there a reason why you watch more men's football?

As I already mentioned a little bit, it's kind of difficult to watch the women's games sometimes, because they're not broadcasted on usual streaming platforms. For example, I don't have Magenta TV, where the women's Bundesliga is broadcast. I think it's also because men's football is more popular. Basically, I would like to watch more women's football, because I think the quality is very good now and the games are exciting.

Do you recognize companies that sponsor women's football and if so, what do you think about it?

Yes, well, I actually know some companies. I have often noticed, especially with the jerseys, that the main sponsors are more noticeable. Nike, for example, is also a sponsor in women's football in the American national team and I have already seen that with Chelsea. I think Coca-Cola and Adidas are also sponsors of women's football.

What do you think about companies sponsoring women's football teams or the organization of women's football? Do you think this is important, and if so, why?

Yes, definitely, I think that is important. The women's teams are just as dependent on money, and I also think that the professionalism and attractiveness of football would increase as a result. Then the Bundesliga would also become more competitive. In general, I think we should just support women's football a bit more so that it can develop and so that it gets more visibility. I often have the feeling that women's football is not so present in the minds of many people because football is somehow always automatically associated with men, which is not really the case. That's why I think it's important that there is more sponsorship.

What do you think might be the reasons why companies invest in women's football?

I would say simply so that you can jump on the trend and perhaps also address new target groups. Companies can certainly address their target group a bit better by sponsoring women's football. They can also increase their brand awareness, which is ultimately a win-win situation for the companies and the football teams, which then have more money at their disposal. This money can also be invested more in visibility and professionalism.

Do you think there are challenges related to sponsorship in women's football?

Yes, this low relevance is definitely a problem, because I have personally experienced time and again that the stadiums are never sold out and the interest in women's football is not yet as high as with the men. The poor broadcasting situation makes it even more difficult to make women's football more attractive and accessible to fans. This all goes a bit hand in hand with the fact that they simply have so little public attention and lack funding, because it is always primarily the men who are sponsored. Negative stereotypes also play a role, that these prejudices against women are still very present and some sponsors are therefore hesitant to invest in women's football.

Do you think there could also be opportunities in women's football?

Yes, definitely. You can win over the values of women's football by creating more authenticity and a more family-like environment. Also, women's football is becoming more and more popular, especially in countries like the USA and Canada, but also increasingly in Germany. So, I think it's a good opportunity for sponsors to invest in such an emerging market segment. And I think that the companies have the opportunity to reach a new target group, because the target group is certainly somewhat different from pure men's football.

What is your opinion on the rise of women's football? why has it only become so popular in recent years?

I personally feel that the women have become super good and sometimes even play better than the men. The recent successes of the women's national team show the increasing quality on a sporting level. I think that the increased media presence also plays a role. I feel that more and more media companies have started to cover women's football. This season the coverage is still limited, but next season it will be on free TV, so a lot has happened in the last few years. Basically, I am happy that women's football is getting more attention, because it deserves it.

Do you think that sports sponsorship in women's football should increase? why or why not?

So, on the one hand it's difficult to make it more professional and attractive, on the other hand you have to be a bit careful that it doesn't become too commercial, like with the men. Because sometimes I have the feeling that everything revolves around sponsors and money. Especially the commercialization of men's football is no longer very popular with the fans.

Have you personally ever bought a product or service because it was associated with a women's football team or event?

Not that I know of, to be honest. It may be that I subconsciously prefer brands like Adidas and Nike for sportswear, so of course it may be that I somehow noticed the brand more positively and that's why I bought something from them but I don't remember consciously buying products from a sponsor of a women's football team.

Do you think there are certain companies that should invest in sponsoring women's football?

I think all big sports brands could invest in women's football. In general, big German companies that have enough money could invest because I think the message behind it would be good, that they would send a signal that even the smaller, unpopular women's football has its reason for being. But I couldn't name any specific companies right now. But I don't think you should necessarily make a difference whether you sponsor only women or only men.

Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the topic of sponsorship in women's football?

So, I would just say that I think sponsorship in women's football is totally important and that it should be developed further. I also notice that people are talking more about women's football lately, which was not the case before. So, I think that the popularity is increasing and that's why I think more should happen now and that clubs or bigger companies are also in demand and should become active. That way, the topic can be pushed even more, and women can get more attention and better support.

Thank you very much for the interview!

Interview Fan 8

Can you tell me something about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?

I have been playing football myself for a few years at my local club. I became interested in football through my brother and quickly learned to love it at a young age. I train three times a week and play on Sundays, so I devote a lot of my free time to football. When time allows, I often watch football on TV or in the stadium. We often watch the Champions League together with the team when it is broadcast after training.

Do you watch more women's or men's football?

I watch more men's football. Often, it's the Bundesliga and the Premier League, but I also like to watch the Champions League. Especially this year, the Bundesliga is super exciting since Bayern might not become champions after all. That's a lot of fun to watch and follow. I watch the women's Bundesliga less because I don't have access to it. I don't even know where it's being broadcast at the moment. I only know that the Women's Champions League is broadcast on DAZN, so I've been watching a few top matches there from time to time.

Is there a reason why you watch more men's or women's football?

I don't know exactly. It's kind of become a habit that people only watch men's football. Often people don't even think about the fact that there is another, certainly very good alternative! When I look at the Women's Champions League, it is played at a very high level, actually no difference to the men's league!

Do you know of any companies that sponsor women's football? If so, what do you think of them?

Yes, I recognize them, especially big sponsors, because of course the jersey sponsor is very noticeable. Especially since I buy a jersey myself from time to time and then the sponsor catches my eye. In itself, I think sponsorship is good because it contributes to further development! But when it happens like in Hoffenheim, that a sponsor puts a lot of money into a club without tradition, etc., then I'm not a big fan of it.

What do you think about companies sponsoring women's football teams or events? Do you think that's important? And why?

It doesn't really matter to me. My opinion of a company doesn't change just because it sponsors. However, it is good to see that more and more bigger and attractive companies are investing in women and women's football is getting more attention as a result.

What do you think are the reasons for corporate sponsorship of women's football?

I think it's mostly financial reasons. Companies benefit from the current upswing in women's football and can make a profit from it. The fact that women's football also stands more for diversity certainly helps some companies to reposition themselves and show themselves as modern, because these issues play a big role in our society nowadays.

In your opinion, are there any particular challenges in sponsoring women's football?

The challenge is probably that not so many people watch. Hardly anyone of my friends watches women's football actively and regularly, which is of course a great pity. The women would definitely deserve it, they also work and train very hard, maybe even harder than the men. I always notice that women's football is always played down and doesn't have the same status as men's football. That is a great pity!

What about the opportunities?

There are definitely opportunities. We women are super motivated and also much closer to the fans. In addition, the sponsorships allow the women to concentrate much better on football and to practice it even more professionally. That increases the quality and attractiveness. Maybe then more people will watch.

How do you assess the upswing in women's football in recent years and what do you think is the reason for it?

Of course, I think the upswing is great, especially since I play football myself. I am happy for my idols and somehow also for my female colleagues that their hard work is finally paying off. Not only men should be recognized and celebrated for their achievements, but also women!

Do you think sports sponsorship in women's football should increase? Why or why not?

Absolutely, with the help of sponsorship, more money is circulating that can be put into the promotion of women. Youth work is also needed here; I notice myself that it is very poor in women's football and often receives no attention. But this promotion can help. Smaller clubs also need the additional money to promote their women, because otherwise the funds are often unequally distributed and the men get a larger share and are better promoted. It starts at the bottom in the amateur sector, like in my club, and goes all the way up to the top of the Bundesliga.

Have you ever bought a product or service because it was associated with a women's football team or event?

No, not really, maybe it's because I don't watch that much women's football myself, but even with the men's team.

Are there certain companies that you think should invest in sponsoring women's football? And why?

It should definitely not only be companies that offer products for women. I would find it a pity if it was only about fulfilling the typical clichés. Companies that offer unisex products would probably be the best option.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the topic of sponsorship in women's football?

No, I think I've said it all!

Thank you!

Fan 9

Can you tell me about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?

Yes, I used to play football myself - for two to three years. Apart from that, I watch a lot of football. I watch all the Chelsea games and also the FC Köln games when I have time. Otherwise, I watch all the big tournaments like the European Championship, the World Cup or the Champions League, I watch almost every game.

Do you watch more women's or men's football?

Mostly only men's football, but now I also watch more women's football. For example, I watched the last European Women's Championship. Then I always watch the Olympics because the Canadian women's football team always plays very well there. Otherwise, I also watch the Chelsea women's team from time to time.

Is there a reason why you watch more men's football?

I like both. But men's football is just much more popular, and I think it has more meaning. For example, if the Chelsea women's team is in the Champions League final or the men's team, I always prefer to watch the men's team. Men's football just has more meaning, at least that's my feeling, but otherwise, I like to watch both.

Is it perhaps also because women's football is not quite as accessible because, for example, the women's Bundesliga can only be seen on Magenta Sport at the moment?

Yes, definitely that too. I mostly watch via Sky Sports or DAZN and since the Women's Bundesliga is not on there, I don't actively watch it or look for a stream on the internet. I wouldn't get Magenta Sport just to watch women's football. Men's football is a bit different... I got DAZN back then to be able to follow it.

Next year, the Women's Bundesliga will also be broadcast on DAZN. Would you then possibly also watch more Women's Bundesliga?

I actually just canceled my DAZN account. I didn't know that the Women's Bundesliga would be broadcast on DAZN next season. But if I still had DAZN, I would definitely watch the 1. FC Köln women's game. But that depends on whether I have a platform and it's on or not. But I won't subscribe just because there is women's football.

Do you know of any companies that sponsor women's football?

Yes, I do recognize some, especially the companies that somehow sponsor the jerseys, because that's what gets the most attention. I also include the discussions about whether the jersey looks good, but otherwise, the sponsors don't stand out to me that much.

How do you feel about companies sponsoring women's football, or do you just perceive it neutrally?

Yes, for me it is rather neutral. I don't perceive it that way, but I think it's good that there is sponsorship in women's football.

Do you think it is important that companies invest in women's football?

I think it is. It is a very important source of income for many clubs, also in men's football. And with the money, the clubs can invest much more, buy new and better players or invest in training methods so that the players are better trained and the quality increases. So I think you can do a lot with the money from sponsorship to professionalize football.

What do you think are the reasons why companies sponsor women's football?

First of all, the economic potential. So visibility and it's just a good marketing measure. I think image promotion also plays an important role here. For example, companies could show that they are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.

In your opinion, are there challenges or opportunities in women's football?

The biggest challenge is that women's football is not very popular yet. I don't think you can make that much money with it. The economic potential is simply much lower than in men's football. The chance is that women's football will become more and more popular. The market is growing more and more, so there is a chance. And you have the opportunity to somehow improve your image, to show that you are committed to equality, and I think that goes down well with a lot of people.

Does this also have an influence on you? Do you perceive these companies more positively?

It definitely resonates well with me. So when I see companies putting a lot of money into women's football, it definitely has a positive effect. I think it's important that companies pursue social goals in addition to their financial goals and set a good example.

What do you think about the quality of women's football? Do you think there are still big differences compared to men's football?

I do not see many differences in terms of quality. Well, I think both are of very high quality. They are just different. And I think you have to get used to it a little bit. I would say that women's football is faster and a bit harder, also in terms of tackling. Women's football is slower, but there are a lot more passes and it's also a bit more tactical.

What do you think has led to the rise of women's football in recent years?

Well, I think it's simply because of the greater media exposure. The European Cup, for example, was freely shown on television. But also, the successes of the women's national teams have led to the upswing. So when the German team wins titles, the interest is much greater. I also notice myself that the interest has grown in the meantime. Moreover, women's football is becoming more and more professional because there is more money. The quality is also quite good, so it's fun to watch women's football.

Have you ever bought or used a product or service because it was associated with a women's football team? Is it different from men's football or is it exactly the same?

No, I haven't. And it doesn't depend on women's or men's football at all, it's just that I don't really pay attention to which companies are the sponsors there. I don't always pay attention to the products that are associated with them.

Do you think there are certain companies that should invest in women's football? For example, should they be bigger or smaller companies, should they be companies that offer unisex products or women's products? What do you think about that?

It doesn't really matter; I think all companies should invest. I think it depends a bit on who the target group really is. Who watches women's football? They are sports fans, so it makes sense if Nike or Adidas are sponsors, for example. But I can also imagine that somehow more women watch women's football, which means that maybe brands that somehow sell women's merchandise would also come into question. In terms of the size of the company, I think bigger companies might be more profitable at the beginning, and yes, I think it's more worthwhile for them at the moment.

Do you have any other comments that are important in the context of women's football?

I just think it's good that investment and relevance are increasing. I think that companies should continue to invest to strengthen women's football. And I think it's definitely worth it because women's football is really developing, and the quality is increasing.

Perfect, thank you very much!

You're welcome, I think it's a really cool topic!

Fan10 David

Can you tell me about your background and experience with football? How often do you watch football?

I have been playing football in the club since I was five years old and have been involved in everything from the bambini to the first team. I am also a big football fan of Borussia Mönchengladbach and probably watch at least one game a week. I also watch short news and football news almost every day. Often also the summary of the last big games in the different leagues. I am really a big football fan and therefore have a broad knowledge of football.

Do you watch more women's or men's football?

Honestly, only men's football. The only women's game I've watched so far was the final of the European Championship last year, where Germany reached the final.

What do you watch in men's football?

Bundesliga, Champions League, Premier League, sometimes the summary of the important French games. So actually, almost everything.

It's definitely a broad spectrum! Is there a reason why you watch more men's football?

Yes, first of all, women's football is not the focus at all. You don't feel like it's being covered anywhere. You can't still watch it somewhere, so it's not accessible at all. Unlike men's football, you would have to make an active effort to watch women's football. Yes, and I just think men's football is much more professional. I just looked, funnily enough, that Borussia Mönchengladbach, for example, doesn't even have a women's football team that plays in the first or second Bundesliga. That somehow shows that professionalization is not that far advanced there yet. I think there are only two teams in the women's league: Bayern and VFL Wolfsburg, who dominate the Bundesliga permanently. There is a very different dynamic in the women's Bundesliga than in the men's Bundesliga, where the teams compete much more with each other.

At the moment, the Women's Bundesliga is still broadcast on Magenta Sport, but from next season, the Women's Bundesliga will also be available on DAZN. Could you imagine watching more Women's Bundesliga then?

Yes, I'm sure of it. If it's on at a time when there's no men's top game on, I would definitely watch one of the women's games, at least if it was a top women's game like Bayern vs Wolfsburg.

Do you know of any companies that sponsor women's football? If so, what do you think of these companies?

I can imagine that Adidas and Nike are now on the rise, especially in American women's football. It's even bigger there. Basically, I think that's good and I think that women's football should definitely be upgraded. It probably helps that money comes in and that it can become more professional. Because I think if it becomes more attractive and more professional, it will also become more interesting for the spectators. At the moment, women's football is still much slower than men's football, but I think that's because many of the players are still amateurs compared to the men. That's why they should invest in women's football because they need the money to professionalize the league and the teams.

Are you positive about companies investing in women's football?

For me, it has more of a positive influence. For me, it is a positive sign when companies try to position themselves in many different ways. And even if women's football doesn't have as many spectators as men's football, companies give women's football the chance to grow. I see that as positive.

What do you think are the reasons why people should invest in women's football?

Because football is the most popular sport in the world. And half of the people are women. First of all, I think we could get a lot more female spectators as fans, who might also identify more with women's football. That is the most important point. In addition, it is also important to create role models for young girls and to make football more relevant and considered as a sport for them. We should send a signal that football does not only have to be the classic male sport but can also be interesting for a young girl.

Are there challenges in women's football?

Yes, the biggest challenge is to improve the very poor image of women's football. When I think about it, none of my friends are very positive about women's football. I think that is the biggest hurdle. Women's football is almost portrayed as a waste of time, boring or not watchable. I think you have to overcome all these negative prejudices first.

What about the opportunities?

I think the opportunities are definitely there. If it is more established in the media, if it is reported more, then it will also get more into people's minds. That's why I think it's important that people get access to it first. If they can then watch freely, there is a chance that they will realize that the quality of women's football is not as bad as previously thought. But women's football has to perform. It has to be really worth watching and exciting because otherwise it doesn't work. But I think there is definitely a chance.

What do you think could be the reason why women's football has experienced an upswing in recent years?

I think the main reason is the general social change that is taking place, i.e. towards more diversity and equality for women. In addition, the successes of the women's national team in recent years also play a big role. This creates more attention, and the quality and attractiveness have also increased. I think companies also use women's football positive attributes for social washing and image enhancement.

Do you think that sports sponsorship in women's football should be expanded? Why or why not?

Yes, I think it should become more. It gives more people access to women's football. It also appeals to younger generations and shows that football is not just for boys, but also for young girls. I think young girls often don't dare to choose football as a sport because it is still very much pushed into the male track. That would change. The bottom line is: the more money is invested, the more professional the sport becomes.

Have you yourself ever bought or used a product or service because it was associated with a women's football team?

No, actually I haven't. The only thing I have bought is merchandising, for example, a jersey or a scarf. But if the main sponsor of Borussia Mönchengladbach is Flatex, for example, then I haven't opened a share account with Flatex. So if anything, it's merchandise!

In your opinion, are there any companies that should invest in women's football in particular?

Well, I think it's the big sporting goods companies like Nike, Adidas, and Puma who also have a lot of money from marketing and can polarize. That's what I see at the moment.

Okay, if you have no more comments, I'm done with my questions!

No, I don't have any more specific questions. I think I've already said everything I can think of on this topic.

Okay, thank you!

Declaration of Originality

Student Name: Jale Schlipf	Matriculation Number: 52583
Date of Birth: 06.04.1999	
Title of Master Thesis: Examining the drivers of women's football sponsorship. An examination of the German football market.	

I declare herewith that this above-mentioned Master Thesis is my own original work.

Furthermore, I confirm that:

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