

Winning at the 2026 World Cup

5 lessons from the Women's Euros

GWI.

The 2025 Women's European Championships smashed all previous attendance and viewership records for the competition, with 12% more European football fans following the tournament than in 2022, and as many as 29% more UK fans. What can we learn from this milestone tournament, and what does it mean for the 2026 World Cup?

02

It introduced new audiences to the game

Following the Women's EUROs, 52% of European fans want to see more media coverage for women's football as a whole.

Looking ahead: The Women's EUROs introduced fresh audiences to football, and they're not leaving anytime soon. In fact, 65% of Women's EUROs fans say they'll engage more with the 2026 World Cup than they did in 2022, and they're just one of many new audiences tuning in. Since the last World Cup, at least 10% more new/expecting parents, Idaho natives, and Louis Vuitton shoppers will be taking notice. For brands, this means the opportunity is in the momentum. By understanding who these fans are, what drives their passion, and how their engagement is evolving, brands can create targeted campaigns that convert one-time viewers into lifelong supporters.

04

Social media was a key way for female fans to engage with the EUROs

While traditional avenues like match day highlights and the sports pages kept the male football fans engaged, women showed up online, with nearly a quarter (23%) of female fans saying they used social media to get live updates of the tournament.

Looking ahead: 71% of those excited about the World Cup believe that social media is an important source of information when looking for sports information and content. Unlocking data on your audience's social media habits will enable you to engage them on this essential touchpoint. The most distinct platforms that fans of the tournament use to get the lowdown on their favorite sports are TikTok, X, and YouTube.

Want to get ahead with a World Cup strategy that's powered by real consumer insight?

Let's talk

01

More men than women tuned into the competition

Despite female engagement with the Women's EUROs increasing 20% in Europe since 2021, more male football fans watched the tournament on TV, with 48% saying they tuned in versus 45% for female fans. And a third of men (33%) actively caught up with the tournament by watching highlights and analysis after the game on TV or online, compared to 30% for women.

Looking ahead: Don't just assume you know who will tune in - use insights to uncover the unexpected. For example, while Singapore won't be represented on the pitch, more consumers there are excited about the 2026 World Cup than in Australia. For brands, this is a signal to look beyond obvious fan bases and understand who's really watching, engage passionate audiences in surprising places, and hone your advertising strategy to unlock deeper connections.

03

Female EUROs fans are more heavily engaged

Despite having a smaller share of viewership, women's EUROs fans are more active participants in the culture around the competition. Compared to men's tournament fans, they show deeper cross-channel engagement; they're more likely to stream podcasts, shop for merchandise, and watch social media content. They're also more likely to engage with tournament sponsors such as Just Eat and Lidl.

Looking ahead: It's important to know which audiences are most engaged with the buzz around the World Cup, and the nuance of how they engage with the tournament's sponsors. Male fans of the World Cup are more likely to engage with McDonald's, but female fans are 10% more likely to engage with Unilever. Understand how these fans consume media and interact with brands, and you'll unlock smarter, more effective sponsorships.

05

Social viewing drives engagement

Fans of the Women's EUROs are more likely than fans of the men's to watch sports with friends, family, or co-workers.

Looking ahead: Those who watch sports in social situations are going to be more engaged at the moment. Social viewers of the World Cup are more likely to structure their day around the competition, and are more likely to be excited about the upcoming tournament. Those who see the World Cup as a social event are 31% more likely than the average viewer to find out more about products being advertised on TV, and 38% more likely to discuss ads with the people they're watching with. Understanding the viewing environment is key to delivering the right message, at the right time. When brands know the setting, they can own the moment.