

LIONESSES LEADING THE PRIDE: AN ASSESSMENT OF  
COMMERCIAL MARKETING OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN  
ENGLAND

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Business Administration  
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Science

May 2024

## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

Taylor Earle for the degree of Bachelor of Science  
in the Department of Business Administration to be taken May 2024

Title: Lionesses Leading the Pride: An Assessment of Commercial Marketing of  
Women's Football in England

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This thesis explores the marketing of women's football in England. Specifically, it analyzes the how The Football Association (The FA) and its' corporate partners marketed women's football in England around the 2022 UEFA European Women's Championship, the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, and the 2022/23- and 2023/24-Women's Super League (WSL) seasons. The research method utilized qualitative coding, analyzing 24 advertisements from corporate partners of the FA, relating to the Lionesses and the WSL. After analyzing, coding, and categorizing the qualitative data, the comprehensive exploration revealed four distinct themes: pride, achievement, women's empowerment, and celebrity culture. This project contributes depth to the current conversation about the heightened global interest in women's sports and the evolving landscape of sports marketing in the age of social media, specifically within the scope of women's football in England.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would first like to thank my thesis committee, especially my primary advisor Dr. Yoav Dubinsky for believing in my project, even when I did not believe in it myself, and for pushing me to create the best possible product. I would also like to thank my CHC representative—Dr. Casey Shoop—and my CHC academic advisor and thesis prospectus professor—Catalina de Onís—for encouraging me during this project and supporting me throughout my time in the CHC.

I would like to give a special thank you to everyone involved in my Sports Business Strategy in the UK study abroad program in London, England during the summer of 2023. My classmates' engagement in the courses and excitement throughout our time in London inspired my thesis topic, becoming the catalyst for this project.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family for their continuous support throughout this process. I could not have maintained motivation to complete a meaningful project without their encouragement.

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## I: Introduction

In recent years, England's women's national football<sup>1</sup> team, known as the Lionesses, has emerged as a dominant force in women's football. The team's victory in the 2022 UEFA European Women's Championship marked a historic achievement, representing the first major trophy for any England team since the men's team's iconic 1966 World Cup win. This tournament was significant for the growth of women's football in Europe in that it more than doubled the reach of the Women's European Championship tournament from 178 million viewers in 2017 to 274 million viewers in 2022 (UEFA, 2022). Additionally, 87,192 fans attended the 2022 Women's European Championship final at Wembley Stadium—England's national stadium—and recorded the highest-ever individual match attendance at the tournament for men or women (UEFA, 2022). The Lionesses also reached the finals of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, solidifying their status as a powerhouse in women's football. The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup was the most-attended Women's World Cup of all time, with nearly 1.98 million attendees, nearly 500,000 over FIFA's initial targets and projections (Needelman, 2023). England has also made significant strides at the club level to develop their domestic league. The Barclay's FA Women's Super League (WSL), the top-tier women's football league in England, has played a pivotal role in this growth. Boasting a majority of England's national team players and attracting top talents from around the world, the league has rapidly grown in revenue and popularity in recent years. During the 2021/22 season, the aggregate revenue for the 12 WSL clubs increased by 60%, from £20m to £32m. (Deloitte UK, 2023). Additionally, there was a 192% increase in average league attendance between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 seasons

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<sup>1</sup> This project utilizes the UK/English term "football." This term is synonymous with the American term "soccer."

(Deloitte UK, 2023). This thesis dissects the portrayal of women's football culture in England through an analysis of advertisements, specifically those created by the FA's corporate partners.

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze how the FA's corporate partners have marketed English women's football since the start of the 2022 Women's European Championship. I approached this by examining the marketing campaigns created by the FA's corporate partners to promote women's football in England. By looking at advertisements at both the club and national levels, I aim to identify and analyze the recurring themes that have emerged through these marketing campaigns. This exploration provides insights into the cultural nuances that shape the perception and reception of women's football in England. This research holds significance for both specialists in the field and a broader audience due to its alignment with the heightened global interest in women's sports, particularly football, in recent years. The study contributes to the ongoing conversation in sports media of promoting growth and investment in women's sports. It sheds light on the globalization of women's sports and the evolving landscape of sports marketing in the age of social media. The project contributes depth to the current conversation, which lacks specificity when discussing women's football culture in England. More broadly, it bridges the gap between the extensive research on men's football in Europe and the evolving global interest in women's sports.

## II: Literature Review

### *Growth of Women's Sports & Football Globally*

In the early 20th century, women's participation in sports was often limited and faced considerable societal resistance (Kane, 1995); however, the landscape began to change with the advent of the feminist movement and increased awareness of gender disparities. Title IX, a U.S. federal law enacted in 1972, played a pivotal role by prohibiting sex-based discrimination in educational programs and activities, including sports (U.S. Department of Education, 1972). This legislation created a surge in female participation in collegiate sports in the U.S. In the pre-Title IX era, 15% of college athletes were women, whereas today, women make up 44% of NCAA athletes (Kaplowitz, 2022). These increasingly equal participation levels of women and men in sports is also reflected globally in Olympic and professional sports. The London 2012 Olympics were the first Olympic Games in which women competed in every sport on the Olympic Programme (IOC, 2023). Additionally, more than a century after women first competed at the Olympic Games, the number of women competing in Tokyo 2020 reached 48% of the total athlete participation (IOC, 2023). The growth of women's sports is underscored by statistics showcasing strong interest and viewership levels. A survey across eight key markets around the world (U.S., U.K., France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Australia, and New Zealand) determined that 84% of sports fans are interested in women's sports, and of those fans, 51% are male (Nielsen Sports, 2018). This demonstrates a substantial increase in commercial opportunities with the ability to target a gender-balanced audience.

In recent years, women's football has experienced a remarkable global surge in popularity and participation, garnering increased attention from fans, sponsors, broadcasters, and historically male-dominated football clubs. FIFA estimates more than 30 million women and

girls played football worldwide in 2018, a number they aim to double by 2026 (FIFA, 2018). This global growth has translated into unprecedented public interest, with increased viewership figures in major women's tournaments. The 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup final between the USA and Japan was the most watched men's or women's soccer game in U.S. history, receiving higher ratings than the NBA Finals, the MLB World Series, or the NHL Stanley Cup that same year (Lewis, 2016). Additionally, the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup final match between England and Spain had a peak audience of 12 million viewers on BBC One, higher than the men's Wimbledon tennis final, which peaked at 11.3 million viewers earlier in the summer. (Reuters, 2023). In Spain, 7.4 million viewers watched the final, which is the highest ever TV audience in Spain for a women's football match (Reuters, 2023). These statistics underscore the increased market for women's football, which can be translated into commercial revenue, including athlete sponsorships, club partnerships, and merchandising sales.

### *Marketing of Women's Sports & Football*

In the early 2000s, there was a significant surge in the visibility of women's sports, as major corporations recognized the marketability of female athletes. Nike emerged as a pioneer, prioritizing the promotion of women's sports by signing endorsement deals with prominent names, such as Serena Williams and Mia Hamm, and launching marketing campaigns specifically targeting women (Arend, 2015). Nike shifted their focus to diversity and inclusion in marketing campaigns, celebrating athletes from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and body types to promote a more inclusive image of women in sports (Posbergh et al., 2023). Female athletes increasingly became advocates for empowerment, equality, and social justice, resonating with fans and attracting corporate sponsorships aligned with these values (Adrian & Faiza, 2022).



While significant strides have been made, ongoing efforts are essential to achieve equal opportunities, recognition, and compensation for female athletes.

Research on the impact of marketing in women's football, particularly focusing on the U.S. Women's National Team (USWNT), highlights the breakout success of the team in the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup. Nike recognized the potential of women's soccer, playing a notable role in signing endorsement deals with star players (Coombs, 2013). As women's soccer gained popularity, corporate brands increased their investment. Other sportswear brands like Adidas and Puma competed with Nike to sponsor national teams, contributing to the growth of the sport's visibility through jersey and merchandise sales (Brettman, 2015). High-profile players like Abby Wambach, Marta, and others began securing individual endorsement deals, helping build their personal brands and contributing to the overall promotion of women's football (Coombs, 2013). Nike maintains their prominent position in marketing women's football, exemplified by its latest campaign, "What The Football." This campaign celebrates past and present football talent, featuring iconic players and Nike athletes. It highlights the momentum in women's sports and underscores Nike's commitment to supporting female athletes through collaborative and holistic efforts (Nike, 2023a). While research on the impact of marketing efforts on women's football in the U.S. is well-established, further investigation is needed regarding the influence of marketing on the culture surrounding women's football in England. Despite advancements, this area remains understudied, indicating the need for deeper exploration and research to understand the broader global impact of marketing in women's football.

### *History & Development of Women's Football in England*

In the context of this global upsurge, the development of women's football in England has taken its own unique path, overcoming historical barriers and cultural resistance. As the birthplace of

football, England traditionally perceived football as a male-dominated sport, resisting women's participation (Dunn & Welford, 2014). Football and rugby were first formalized in England by men, and these sports were used as part of the physical education to teach schoolboys about values such as teamwork and discipline (Edelman & Wilson, 2017). During World War I, there was an upsurge in the popularity of women's football in England while men were fighting in the war. Women's football matches drew significant crowds, such as the 1920 match between Dick, Kerr Ladies and St. Helens, entertaining over 53,000 spectators (Pfister & Pope, 2018). Football authorities saw the rise of women's football as a threat to the male game (Williams, 2003). The FA, the governing body of English football, passed a resolution in 1921 banning women from playing on the FA's grounds (Dunn & Welford, 2014). In response to this ban, women continued to play independently under the Women's Football Association (WFA), but the prohibition significantly limited the sport's growth, relegating it to a participatory rather than a spectacle sport (Dunn & Welford, 2014). It was not until the FA formally took over the administration of women's football from the WFA in 1993 that significant changes occurred; the FA continued the FWA Cup tradition and launched the Women's Premier League (FAWPL) later that year (The FA, 2022a). This transition allowed for a stronger infrastructure and financial backing, offering a more accommodating environment for the sport to grow (Dunn & Welford, 2014). Despite this change in administration, the initial adaptations did not entirely alter the perception of female football in the England. The sport was merely integrated into existing male structures that did not necessarily suit the needs of women and girls (Dunn & Welford, 2014). The turning point arrived when England hosted the UEFA Women's European Championship in 2005, which saw higher than expected audiences, indicating a growing interest in the sport despite the country's poor performance and lack of elite-level club competition (Dunn & Welford, 2014).

### *The FA Women's Super League*

Recognizing the need for a higher-quality domestic league to improve the national side and retain English players from overseas leagues, the FA launched the Women's Super League (WSL) in 2011 (Dunn & Welford, 2014). The league, initially a semi-professional summer format, expanded in 2014 to include a second division with provisions for promotion and relegation, necessitating clubs to affiliate with men's clubs (Dunn & Welford, 2014). Nevertheless, criticism arose regarding the FA's club licensing and the league format not effectively elevating women's football out of its inferior and marginalized status (Dunn & Welford, 2014). However, a significant turning point came with substantial investments into the WSL, notably from Barclays Bank in 2019, marking the largest commercial investment in women's sport in the UK. This investment not only bolstered the league but also initiated strategies for its development, including the creation of football schools to train thousands of girls (de Oliveira, 2022). The success of the WSL has gradually elevated its status, regarded as one of the top women's football leagues globally alongside the U.S.'s National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) and Spain's Primera Iberdrola. It attracts star players worldwide and has brought England's top women's footballers to play domestically, as evidenced by 20 out of 23 players from the league representing England in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup (Gerty, 2023).

Successful WSL teams look forward to playing their UEFA Women's Champions League matches at Wembley Stadium and are scheduled to play a portion of their WSL season matches in iconic stadiums like Stamford Bridge (Chelsea), Etihad Stadium (Manchester City), and Emirates Stadium (Arsenal) (Salley, 2023). These venues used to serve only the affiliated men's English Premier League teams, but they have since attracted staggering numbers of female

football fans. Arsenal held the single-match 2022/23 WSL attendance record with 47,367, followed by Manchester City with 44,881, and Chelsea 38,350 (Salley, 2023). Additionally, the WSL's broadcast revenues increased to a reported £8 million per year in the 2021/22 season due to the FA's agreement with Sky Sports and the BBC. This marked the largest broadcast deal for any professional women's football league (Deloitte UK, 2023).

### *The Lionesses: England's Women's National Football Team*

England's women's national football team is known as the Lionesses. Their name represents a sense of national identity for the women's team alongside the men's national team, known as the "Three Lions" (Bowes & Bairner, 2019). "Lioness" is an empowering term for the team as it shows that women can exhibit characteristics typically associated with 'hegemonic masculinity', such as bravery, courage and being good at sport (Petty & Pope, 2018). The triumphs of the Lionesses have been significant indicators of the investment in women's football paying off. Their achievements at the most recent Women's World Cups include placing third in 2015, reaching the semi-finals in 2019, and achieving a second-place finish in the final match in the 2023 tournament (The FA, 2023a). With each major tournament, the Lionesses have become a more dominant force in the national women's football landscape.

The Lionesses had their "breakout" moment in 2022 when they won the UEFA Women's European Championship tournament, which England hosted. It was the most watched match in the tournament's history, with the tournament boasting a global cumulative live viewership of over 374 million across 197 territories (UEFA, 2022). The tournament garnered unprecedented social media attention, with 453 million cumulative social interactions, 39% being on TikTok and 21% on Twitter (UEFA, 2022). The 2022 tournament was an operational success. It shattered records and surpassed expectations, boasting a total attendance of nearly 575,000. Not

only did it exceed the attendance figures of previous Women's European Championship tournaments, but it also more than doubled the attendance from the Netherlands 2017 tournament, surpassing the ambitions set prior to the event (UEFA, 2022). Since the 2022 tournament, the significance of the England Women's national team has notably increased. On average, 49% of football fans now consider the Lionesses important, compared to 35% before the Tournament (UEFA, 2022). A positive shift in impressions is evident, with 72% of surveyed football fans reporting a more favorable view of the Lionesses post-tournament (UEFA, 2022). Following the final in August 2022, 77% of football fans believed the Lionesses are good role models, marking a substantial increase from 56% in June 2022 before the tournament (UEFA, 2022). This change in perception underscores how hosting major sporting events can significantly boost a team's popularity and visibility. These successes also communicate the impact of the WSL's induction on the national team's performance and highlight the FA's investment in women's football.

Although there is existing literature about the marketing of women's sports and the marketing of men's football specifically, the connection between marketing efforts and their influence on women's football in England remains an understudied area. While existing research focuses on women's sports marketing, particularly in the U.S. context (Arend, 2015; Coombs, 2013), a deeper exploration of the effects on the English culture is still in its infancy, indicating the need for further investigation and research in this field.

### **III: Methodology**

This study aims to answer the following research question: How has The Football Association (The FA) and its' corporate partners marketed women's football in England prior to and during the 2022 UEFA European Women's Championship, the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, and the 2022/23 and 2023/24 FA Women's Super League (WSL) seasons?

The study explores the impact and reach of these advertisements within the context of women's football and its influence on the global women's sports culture. The methods section of this research is designed to answer the research question and comprehensively explore and discuss the role of marketing in English women's football. The study focuses on women's football in England for several reasons: (1) the cultural significance of football in England as the birthplace of the most popular sport in the world, (2) the recent success of the Lionesses in the 2022 European Women's Championship and the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, (3) the record-breaking attendance and attraction of the 2022/23 WSL season, and (4) the relevance of English women's football within the context of the globalization of women's sports.

#### *Data Collection*

This qualitative research uses content analysis (Saldaña, 2016) of 24 advertisements from corporate partners of the FA, relating to the Lionesses and the WSL. To ensure a comprehensive selection of data, the study utilizes purposeful sampling (Saldaña, 2016). The study selected advertisements solely from the FA's list of "Partners of The FA Group" (The FA, 2023b) to ensure the relevance to the Lionesses and WSL as entities under the FA organization. The FA has 28 official corporate partners; however, this study excludes companies from the list that have not produced campaigns relating to the Lionesses or WSL to maintain significance to research question.

The selected advertisements were created by Xbox, Barclays, Nike, Nuffield Health, Nike, EE, Google Cloud, Google Pixel, Lucozade, Sky Sports, BBC, Disney, Budweiser, Xero, KIND, LG, and the FA itself. The selected advertisements are listed in Table 1 in the Appendix. Each advertisement takes the form of a YouTube video, a television commercial, or a promotional campaign video. Each selected advertisement is associated with one of the four most significant events in English women's football between 2022 and 2024: the 2022 UEFA European Women's Championship (Euros), the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, the 2022/23 WSL season, and the 2023/24 WSL season. The cumulative number of 24 advertisements used in the study accurately represents the ratio of advertisements that were produced for each event. While compiling the list of advertisements for the study, I found that there about 3 major tournament (Euros or World Cup) advertisements produced for each WSL advertisement produced (a 3:1 ratio). 9 of the selected advertisements pertain the 2022 Euros, 9 to the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, 3 to the 2022/23 WSL season, and 3 to the 2023/2024 WSL season.

### *Data Analysis*

The data analysis process for qualitative coding integrates two elemental coding methods: in vivo coding and descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2016). In the first phase, in vivo coding, I derived codes directly from the transcripts and on-screen text, ensuring that the study's terminology remained rooted in native English terminology. The second phase, descriptive coding, addressed gaps not explicitly covered within the transcripts or text, particularly focusing on codes for visual or auditory concepts such as images and background music. The first and second phases of coding are outlined in Table 2 in the Appendix. This phase involved transforming raw data into codes. Next, I listed each word from the data collection and counted its frequency. The frequencies of each code are listed in Table 3 in the Appendix. This culminated in the creation of

50 codes. To streamline the coding process, I amalgamated words with identical meanings or roots, along with synonyms within the contextual domain. I recalculated post-consolidation.

The subsequent step transitioned the codes to categories. Initially, words with the highest frequencies served as the foundation for the categories, facilitating the process of pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016). Through this method, codes were combined into 14 distinct categories. An example of this process is 'inspire', 'hopes', and 'dreams' clustered under the overarching theme of 'inspiration'. Lastly, these categories were further organized into four unique themes, ensuring that each category aligned with a broader conceptual framework. The themes and categories are outlined in Table 4 in the Appendix. For instance, the theme of 'women's empowerment' encompasses categories such as 'youth access to sport' and 'combatting sexism', thereby establishing a cohesive narrative structure that illuminated the underlying patterns and insights gleaned from the qualitative data analysis.



## IV: Findings

After analyzing, coding, and categorizing the qualitative data about marketing of women's soccer in England from the 2022 European Women's Championship and spanning throughout the 2023/24 WSL season, a comprehensive exploration has revealed four distinct themes that encapsulate the narrative preceding. Based on the thematic analysis, four themes emerged from the data: (a) pride, (b) achievement, (c) women's empowerment, and (d) celebrity culture. Each theme captures multifaceted insights into the dynamics and perceptions about the promotion of women's football. This section outlines each of the four themes, providing at least one of the analyzed advertisements as an example within every category.

### *Theme 1: Pride*

Pride serves as a pivotal element in the marketing of women's football in England, manifesting itself on both national and club levels, as well as through the unwavering support of fans. This theme of pride resonates deeply within the collective consciousness of the nation, fostering a sense of unity, identity, and belonging among supporters of the Lionesses and within the WSL. Through a series of advertisements and campaigns, pride is not only celebrated but also amplified, underscoring its significance in shaping the narrative surrounding women's football in England. The categories within this theme include national pride, local pride, fan support, and the spectacle of women's football.

At the national level, pride burgeons from the fervent support for the Lionesses, evoking a sense of patriotism among English citizens. The squad announcement video for the Lionesses' 2022 Euros tournament captures the essence of this national pride as excitement unfolds across various settings throughout the country (The FA, 2022c). Set against the backdrop of anticipation and excitement, the advertisement portrays scenes in pubs, taxis, and homes, where individuals

eagerly await the squad announcement on television. Notably, the inclusion of national icons like David Beckham amplifies the significance of this moment, symbolizing the unity between past and present generations in supporting the team. Central to the narrative is a young girl meticulously completing a sticker book, with each sticker representing a player on the 2022 Euros squad, illustrating the profound impact of national representation on aspiring footballers and fans alike.

Similarly, Budweiser's advertisement for the 2023 Women's World Cup pays homage to the rich history of the women's national team, highlighting the evolution of women's football in England since its inception in 1972 (Budweiser, 2023). Through a visual narrative, the advertisement traces the journey of star players across different eras, emphasizing the continuity and legacy of national pride inherent in the team's history. By commemorating pivotal moments and iconic players, the advertisement reinforces the notion that national pride transcends individual accolades, serving as a collective tribute to the enduring spirit of the Lionesses.

At the local level, pride extends beyond national representation to encompass fervent support for club teams within the WSL. In a promotional advertisement for the BBC Women's Football show ahead of the 2022/23 WSL season, Lionesses players express their pride while wearing their respective club jerseys (BBC, 2022). This juxtaposition between national and club pride underscores the distinct but interconnected identities within women's football, wherein players navigate between representing their country and their club with equal fervor. As the momentum of women's football continues to surge on the national stage, the advertisement capitalizes on the symbiotic relationship between national and club pride, highlighting the pivotal role of the WSL in nurturing talent and fostering a sense of belonging within the football community.

The promotional video for the 2023/24 WSL season further amplifies the intertwining narratives of national and club pride, showcasing star players from the Women's World Cup who also compete in the WSL (BBC, 2023). By featuring international icons like Mary Earps (Manchester United and England women's national team) and Sam Kerr (Chelsea FC and Australia women's national team), the advertisement reinforces the notion that pride transcends borders, uniting players and fans in celebration of their shared passion for the sport. The inclusion of triumphant moments, such as Chelsea FC women's team raising the trophy from the previous season, serves as a poignant reminder of the collective achievements and aspirations that bind clubs and communities together.

In addition to players and teams, the role of fans emerges as a cornerstone of pride within the realm of women's football marketing. In a segment of Xbox's campaign before the 2022 Euros, Ella Toone reflects on the pivotal role of her personal support network in fueling her dreams and aspirations (Xbox, 2022). Through candid interviews and personal anecdotes, the advertisement humanizes the journey of aspiring footballers, emphasizing the relationship between players and their supporters. Similarly, the FA's video for the Lionesses' 2023 World Cup campaign directly addresses fans, imploring them to continue their unwavering support for the team (The FA, 2023c). By inviting fans to be part of the narrative, the video fosters a sense of inclusivity and belonging, reaffirming that pride is not merely confined to the players on the field but extends to the collective efforts of supporters worldwide.

The spectacle surrounding women's football serves as a testament to the monumental level pride that England has for its respective teams. In a Nike campaign preceding the 2022 Euros, players are depicted as "larger than life," with images projected onto iconic landmarks throughout London (Nike, 2022a). This spectacle not only amplifies the excitement and

anticipation surrounding the tournament but also underscores the transformative power of women's football as an unmissable cultural phenomenon.

Pride serves as a unifying force within the marketing of women's football in England, permeating through various levels of the sport—from national representation to club loyalty and fan support. Through compelling advertisements and campaigns, the narrative of pride is not only celebrated but also cultivated, shaping the ethos of women's football, and reinforcing its significance within the broader cultural landscape. As players, teams, and fans continue to rally behind the Lionesses and the WSL, pride remains an enduring testament to the resilience, passion, and collective spirit that define women's football in England.

### *Theme 2: Achievement*

Achievement stands as a defining theme within the marketing narrative of women's football in England, encapsulating the relentless pursuit of excellence and success at both the national and international level. Through strategic campaigns and compelling narratives, the theme of achievement underscores the aspirations, determination, and triumphs of the Lionesses and WSL, shaping the perception of women's football as a realm of unparalleled accomplishment and opportunity. The categories that fit under the theme of achievement include vision, teamwork, competition, determination, and team success.

At the forefront of achievement lies the vision and goal-setting process, wherein players articulate their ambitions and dreams with unwavering determination. In a poignant campaign for Xero preceding the 2023 Women's World Cup, Lionesses including Hannah Hampton, Alex Greenwood, and Ellie Roebuck articulate their early aspirations leading up to the tournament (Xero, 2023). Central to their discourse is the ultimate goal of winning the WWC trophy, regarded as the pinnacle of the sport. Through their collective commitment and shared vision,

every Lioness is unified in their pursuit of success, aligning their individual aspirations with the broader objectives of the team.

Moreover, achievement is intrinsically linked to the notion of teamwork, transcending beyond the national stage to encompass club-level endeavors. A promotional video for the 2022/23 WSL season, orchestrated by the FA, emphasizes the significance of "togetherness" as the cornerstone of achievement (The FA, 2022c). By showcasing the collective efforts of players across different clubs, the advertisement underscores the interdependent relationship between individual contributions and team success, culminating in the ultimate achievement of raising the championship trophy at the season's conclusion.

The spirit of competition serves as a catalyst for achievement, fueling the determination and resilience of the Lionesses on and off the field. In an engaging segment for LG ahead of the 2023 WWC, players such as Beth England and Jess Carter are put through trivia and football skill challenges, highlighting their unwavering competitive edge (LG, 2023). Even in seemingly mundane activities, the competitive spirit of the team shines through, underscoring their relentless pursuit of victory and achievement.

On-field characteristics further exemplify the essence of achievement, as depicted in a Google Cloud TV commercial preceding the 2022 Euros featuring Lionesses such as Jess Carter, Georgia Stanway, and Nikita Parris (Google Cloud, 2022). The advertisement showcases the players' rigorous training regimes and relentless work ethic, highlighting the indispensable role of determination, commitment, and mental fortitude in achieving success. While data analytics may provide valuable insights, true achievement is ultimately derived from the players' grit and unwavering dedication to excellence.

The culmination of achievement manifests in the form of team success, symbolized by historic victories and monumental accomplishments. In Nike's "Home" campaign during and after the 2022 Euros, the triumph of the Lionesses is celebrated as a momentous achievement for women's football in England (Nike, 2022b). Against the backdrop of the iconic "Football's Coming Home" anthem, the video captures the jubilant celebrations of the team and the nation, underscoring the significance of winning the tournament on home soil. This historic achievement not only solidifies the Lionesses' place in the annals of football history but also garners international recognition for the sport of women's football in England.

Achievement serves as a driving force within the marketing narrative of women's football in England, symbolizing the culmination of dreams, perseverance, and collective efforts. Through strategic campaigns and compelling narratives, the achievements of the Lionesses and WSL teams transcend the realm of sport, resonating as symbols of success. As women's football continues to ascend to new heights, the theme of achievement remains at the forefront, illuminating the path towards excellence and acclaim on and off the field.

### *Theme 3: Women's Empowerment*

The theme of women's empowerment emerges as a central narrative within the marketing discourse surrounding women's football in England, exemplifying a commitment to fostering inclusivity, breaking down barriers, and challenging societal norms. Through strategic campaigns and compelling narratives, the Lionesses and the WSL propel the message of empowerment, inspiring a new generation of girls and women to defy expectations and pursue their passions fearlessly. This theme of women's empowerment can be broken down into the categories of youth access to sport, pushing boundaries, and combatting sexism.

One avenue through which women's empowerment is realized is through youth access to sport, as depicted in an advertisement released by Barclays ahead of the 2022 Euros tournament (Barclays, 2022). Encouraging girls to play sports and committing to providing equal access to football in schools by 2024, Barclays takes proactive steps in promoting inclusivity and empowerment within the sporting realm. By fostering community involvement and empowering young girls to try sports from a young age, the campaign underscores the transformative power of sport in shaping self-esteem, confidence, and resilience.

Similarly, a video segment from Nuffield Health preceding the 2023 Women's World Cup amplifies the importance of access to sport for young girls (Nuffield Health, 2023). Featuring Lionesses Rachel Daly, Hannah Hampton, and Esme Morgan engaging with young girls and fans, the segment highlights the barriers overcome by female athletes and underscores the significance of providing equal opportunities for girls to participate in sports. By sharing personal anecdotes and experiences, the players serve as powerful role models, inspiring young girls to pursue their athletic ambitions with determination and perseverance.

Empowerment also manifests through the Lionesses' relentless efforts in pushing boundaries and challenging stereotypes within the sporting arena. In a promotional video for the 2022/23 WSL season from Sky Sports, key England players are showcased in their club WSL uniforms, staring confidently into the camera against the backdrop of Nina Simone's "Feeling Good" (Sky Sports, 2022). The song is historically linked to overcoming racial oppression, but more broadly, it is about having optimism after overcoming adversity. Symbolizing the rise of women's football in England following the success of the Lionesses at the Euros 2022, the video embodies a new era of optimism and empowerment, defying stereotypes and reshaping perceptions surrounding women's sports.

Moreover, combatting sexism remains a critical aspect of the empowerment narrative within women's football marketing. An advertisement released by EE prior to the 2022 Euros features Lionesses such as Jordan Henderson, Ellen White, and Lucy Bronze overcoming potential challenges faced by women in sports, including motherhood and online hate from internet trolls (EE, 2022). By taking a clear stance against sexism and advocating for accountability, the advertisement sends a powerful message of solidarity and empowerment, asserting that female athletes should not have to endure discrimination or prejudice in pursuing their passions.

Similarly, a Lucozade campaign released during the 2022 Euros promotes gender equality within sport, featuring England women's national team legend Toni Duggan and former England men's national team goalkeeper David James (Lucozade Sport, 2022). Through bold statements painted onto a football field, such as "football is football" and "an England fan is an England fan," the campaign emphasizes the importance of respecting and celebrating both men's and women's football in England. By rejecting gender inequality and championing inclusivity, the campaign embodies the spirit of empowerment, advocating for a level playing field where talent and dedication transcend gender norms.

The theme of women's empowerment serves as a guiding principle within the marketing narrative of women's football in England, embodying a commitment to equality, representation, and social progress. Through strategic campaigns and powerful narratives, the Lionesses and WSL teams inspire a new era of empowerment, challenging stereotypes, breaking down barriers, and fostering inclusivity within the sporting realm. As women's football continues to thrive and evolve, the message of empowerment remains a steadfast beacon of hope, resilience, and possibility for generations to come.



#### *Theme 4: Celebrity Culture*

Celebrity culture intertwines with the marketing narrative of women's football in England, elevating players of the women's national team and the WSL to iconic status and inspiring a new generation of fans. Through strategic campaigns and innovative initiatives, the theme of celebrity culture celebrates the influence, inspiration, and relatability of these sporting icons, transcending the realm of sport to become cultural phenomena. The categories of inspiration, off-field insights into players' lives, and pop culture make up the theme of celebrity culture.

The Lionesses' role as inspirational figures is showcased in a video for a joint initiative between Disney and the FA, where primary school girls are introduced to football through Disney storytelling (Disney, 2023). Through a fairytale narrative, Lionesses Leah Williamson, Lucy Bronze, and Lauren James are depicted as "Lioness Godmothers," inspiring a young girl named Ella to believe in her dreams of playing football. This initiative not only fosters a love for the sport but also positions the Lionesses as superstars and idols for young girls to look up to, creating a lasting legacy for future generations.

A campaign by KIND to send off the Lionesses to the 2023 Women's World Cup showcases the widespread impact and admiration garnered by the team (KIND, 2023). Compiled messages from fans, friends, family, and Lioness legends spell out "Lionesses, You're Our Pride" on a field where the team's plane would fly over, underscoring the Lionesses' role as role models to be admired by people of all ages. The involvement of fans in the campaign not only amplifies the Lionesses' status as celebrities but also reflects the way celebrity culture can mobilize communities to celebrate shared ideals and aspirations. Furthermore, the participation of English women's football legends—Faye White and Rachel Yankey—in this tribute reinforces the interconnectedness within multiple generations of fame, where the endorsement of new

generations of athletes can significantly elevate a team's profile and capture the public's attention and imagination. This collective outpouring of support highlights the transcendent influence of celebrity culture in uniting fans and inspiring collective pride.

Off-field insights into players' lives offer a glimpse into the personalities and relatability of the Lionesses, further solidifying their status as cultural icons. In a Nuffield Health video segment starring England Lionesses Millie Bright and Rachel Daly, fans witness the friendly banter and camaraderie between teammates, fostering a sense of connection and relatability (Nuffield Health, 2022). Additionally, a Google Pixel ad starring Lauren James offers insight into the player's personal life and superstitions, humanizing her in the eyes of fans and deepening the bond between player and audience (Google Pixel, 2023). This relatability and familiarity contribute to the allure of celebrity culture, as fans feel a personal connection with their sporting idols.

Pop culture intersects with women's football marketing through innovative campaigns that leverage current trends and cultural references to amplify the celebrity status of the Lionesses and WSL players. Nike's "Like a Lioness" campaign in 2023 creatively promotes the Lionesses through a song celebrating what it means to be a Lioness, becoming a rallying cry and symbol of support during the World Cup (Nike, 2023b). The campaign features female UK rapper, MS Banks. Lionesses such as Lucy Bronze, Ella Toone, Lauren James, and Georgia Stanway also star in the video. The song "Like a Lioness" trended on TikTok during the 2023 Women's World Cup; women's football legends including Jill Scott made a video using the song and UK-based influencers created a viral dance to the song. The viral nature of the campaign on social media positions the Lionesses as cultural icons embraced by people across the nation. Similarly, Sky Sports' "Keep Up" campaign for the 2023/24 WSL season remixes Stormzy's

iconic song "Shut Up" into a way for fans to engaged with the women's game (Sky Sports, 2023). By incorporating UK rap and pop culture references, the campaign bridges the worlds of sport, music, and culture, appealing to a diverse audience and cementing the WSL's position within the cultural zeitgeist.

Furthermore, the FA's advertisement for the 2023/24 season launch explicitly refers to WSL players as "superstars" and "world-class," leveraging pop culture references such as "new season drops" to capture the excitement and anticipation surrounding the women's game (The FA, 2023d). This keen awareness of trends and pop culture underscores the commitment of women's football marketing to remain current and captivating, further solidifying the celebrity status of its players within the cultural landscape.

The theme of celebrity culture permeates the marketing narrative of women's football in England, celebrating the influence, inspiration, and relatability of the Lionesses and WSL players. Through strategic campaigns, innovative initiatives, and cultural references, women's football marketing transcends the boundaries of sport to become a cultural phenomenon embraced by fans of all ages and backgrounds. As the influence of celebrity culture continues to grow, the Lionesses and WSL players stand as symbols of empowerment, inspiration, and collective pride, inspiring a new generation of fans and reshaping the cultural landscape of women's football in England.

The following discussion section synthesizes the four themes—pride, achievement, women's empowerment, and celebrity culture—revealing the narratives interwoven within the marketing of women's football in England. Each theme serves as a distinct thread, yet together, they form a cohesive fabric that encapsulates the multifaceted dynamics and perceptions surrounding the promotion of women's football. Pride emerges as a unifying force, fostering a

sense of unity, identity, and belonging among supporters at both national and club levels. Achievement stands as a testament to the relentless pursuit of excellence, symbolizing the aspirations, determination, and triumphs of the Lionesses and WSL teams. Women's empowerment emerges as a central narrative, championing inclusivity, breaking down barriers, and challenging societal norms within the sporting realm. Celebrity culture elevates players to iconic status, inspiring a new generation of fans and reshaping the cultural landscape of women's football. The convergence of these themes illuminates the transformative power and enduring significance of women's football in England, providing a nuanced understanding of its role within the broader cultural fabric.

## V: Discussion

In the contemporary landscape of sports marketing, the narrative of the promotion of women's football in England has evolved to meet the nuanced demands of audiences both within the UK and across the globe. This discussion intertwines the strategic marketing themes of pride, achievement, women's empowerment, and celebrity culture, contextualized within the scope of distinct audiences. It also delineates the Lionesses' journey to establish their unique brand within the wider sphere of UK football.

### *Synergy of Club & Country*

The UK audience is pivotal to the discussion, magnifying the interplay between club and country representation. The unity and pride for the Lionesses transcend individual clubs, with many national team players choosing to remain playing domestically (Dunn and Welford, 2024). This not only strengthens the WSL but also attracts international eyes to the league, augmenting domestic viewership and fostering a sense of unity that transcends individual clubs (Gerty, 2023). Unlike in the US, the distinct separation between club and country is less pronounced. In the BBC campaign for the 2022/23 WSL season, Lionesses take pride in donning their club colors. This balance of national and club allegiance highlights the dual identities of English female footballers, who passionately represent both their country and their club teams (BBC, 2022). Women's football in England benefits from a synergistic relationship—structurally and organizationally interconnected; both realms are governed by the FA, which facilitates shared resources, such as playing in the men's stadiums (Dunn & Welford, 2014). Using the established fan base of men's football has proved to be a shrewd move, allowing a legacy interwoven with the wider English football history (Edelman and Wilson, 2017). It is a dynamic unlike what's found in the US, where professional and national representation are disconnected, and unlike the

compartmentalization seen within UK men's football (Kane, 1995). This interconnectivity not only aids in marketing to an international audience but also attracts more attention to the WSL from abroad, strengthening the brand of English women's football and the league as top tier (Salley, 2023).

### *Crafting the Lionesses' Brand Identity*

The Lionesses' branding holds a delicate balance. Distinctiveness from the men's team does not equate to disassociation from the English football narrative; rather, it is an embrace of their unique strengths and achievements, conveyed without overshadowing the rich history of the sport within the country. Broader marketing campaigns trends have shifted from focusing on individual stars to a more inclusive, team-oriented approach (Posbergh et al.,2023). The marketing smartly positions the women's team not merely as a subsidiary but as an integral part of this history, with campaigns showing a range of players, moving away from the star-centric focus typical in sports marketing, to a more inclusive and team-oriented approach. The FA's promotional video for the 2022 European Women's Championship expertly exhibits this type of team-oriented marketing approach, in which each player from the team is featured in the video, as opposed to a few star players (The FA, 2022b). This strategy leverages existing systems and organizational structures while ensuring that their contributions are distinct and impactful.

### *Familiar Narratives & Emerging Distinctions*

Marketing efforts, such as Nike's "Home" campaign post-Euros victory (Nike, 2022b), resonate with an American public familiar with their own "99ers moment" with the US Women's National Team's World Cup victory. This strategic marketing approach is akin to the visibility surge in women's sports marketing in the US in the early 2000s (Arend, 2015). Narrating the Lionesses' story follows the chronology of their evolution—before the Euros, the soaring

triumph of the Euros win, and the aftermath. This illustrates a vital marketing pivot: the shift from proactive to reactive paradigms. Readily available campaigns were unleashed following success, the Nike: Home campaign serving as a prime example (Nike, 2022b). This campaign is reminiscent of the iconic '99ers branding, which built on national pride and success to solidify a legacy, as discussed by Coombs (2013). This strategic use of marketing to lock in legacy and anticipation for future growth is a tactic that has been effective in the US, following the historical precedent set by Title IX (U.S. Department of Education, 1972).

The US, with its NCAA and Title IX, has historically led the way in female sports participation (Kaplowitz, 2022). Although England does not have analogous structures, it has made strides in different areas of women's empowerment within sports by amplifying the solidarity between men's and women's teams in England at both the national team and club level. Noteworthy is the visible support from the England men's team, specifically in Lucozade's "Football is Football" campaign—a solidarity less pronounced in the US environment (Lucozade Sport, 2022). By identifying these strategic differences, the Lionesses' campaigns exemplify how harnessing cross-gender support within sports can be a potent force for cultural change and is strategically used to enhance the Lionesses' brand (Adrian & Faiza, 2022).

### *The Celebrity Athlete Model & Social Media*

The model of the celebrity athlete, epitomized by David Beckham, has laid the groundwork upon which the marketing of the Lionesses builds (The FA, 2022b). This approach appropriates the US's robust social media strategies, emphasizing the players' relatability and down-to-earth personas to connect with the audience. In English women's football, the campaigns move away from promoting potentially controversial figures toward nationally beloved icons; the players emerge not only as outstanding athletes but also as women of influence with stories that resonate

on a deeper level (Xero, 2023). This celebrity culture extends beyond just the pitch; it seeps into pop culture, leveraging the ubiquity of social media—a domain where the US particularly excels (Adrian & Faiza, 2022). This approach to celebrity culture in sports marketing aligns with the inclusive image of women in sports promoted by Nike and other leaders in the marketing of women's sports sphere (Posbergh et al., 2023). Strategic partnerships and campaigns, like the "Like a Lioness" initiative featuring popular UK musical talents, create viral moments that coalesce sports and popular culture, heightening the players' visibility and relatability (Nike, 2023b).

### *The Future of Women's Football Marketing in England*

The unfolding narrative of women's football in England, targeted through tailored marketing, attests to the progress of the sport. It walks the fine line between celebrating unique accomplishments and cementing a synergistic identity within the broader UK football landscape (Bowes & Bairner, 2019). As the Lionesses carve out their own storied legacy, they carefully balance the scales of distinctiveness and integration. They leverage established structures and popularity in their ascent toward not only achieving competitive greatness but also striving for wider societal impacts (Dunn & Welford, 2014). The themes of pride, achievement, empowerment, and celebrity culture represent not just a marketing strategy but reflect larger societal shifts. They reflect an England where women's football garners the national respect and attention it duly deserves (Adrian & Faiza, 2022).

The Lionesses' emergence as cultural icons—through relatable, empowering, and broad-reaching campaigns—serves not only as a triumph of marketing but also as a cornerstone of progress in sports culture and beyond (Arend, 2015). The marketing of women's football in England tells a compelling tale, one where pride intermingles with achievement, where



empowerment finds a unique voice, and where the allure of celebrity is conscientiously crafted. As the Lionesses continue their storied march, they do so with a nation's pride and the world's admiration, inspired by a marketing narrative as multifaceted as the game they play.

## **VI: Conclusion**

This study has delved into and examined the marketing strategies employed by the FA's corporate partners to promote English women's football from the onset of the 2022 European Women's Championship until the beginning of the 2023/24 WSL season. As a result, it is imperative to accentuate England as a quintessential model for cultivating a thriving women's football culture. Through adept marketing strategies, England exemplifies how the promotion of women's teams does not detract from the success of men's football but can instead coalesce harmoniously, elevating both simultaneously. The FA's corporate partners have leveraged established pathways and traditions inherent to the English footballing ethos, whilst pinpointing the unique aspects of women's football that distinguish it from the men's game, thus enhancing its appeal.

The themes of pride, achievement, women's empowerment, and celebrity culture are not only marketing constructs but are adeptly woven into the fabric of England's footballing culture. By utilizing established traditions, the resonance of women's football is magnified without undermining the men's game, thereby fostering mutual growth. This strategy is markedly illustrated by not pitting women's progress against men's achievements, but by celebrating both, showcasing that the essence of football transcends gender and encapsulates a shared national devotion. England's approach identifies and amplifies the unique qualities of women's football—its community connection, the relatability of players, and the inclusive atmosphere at games—which might provide alternative, perhaps even enhanced, fan experiences. This distinction fortifies women's football as a standalone entity within the sports arena, compelling the public to invest in the women's game for its intrinsic values and strengths.

### *Limitations & Opportunities for Further Research*

Although the project aimed to have a meticulous approach to examining the current landscape of women's football marketing, there are some key limitations and delimitation of the study.

Isolating the analysis to 24 advertisements from FA corporate partners meant that a broader spectrum of marketing efforts, especially grassroots or non-corporate initiatives, were not considered. Such exclusion may have limited a holistic view of the marketing strategies affecting women's football culture. Another constraint was the qualitative research method. The choice of content analysis over mixed-methods research, which might have included quantitative surveys or interviews with fans, limited the scope and generalizability of the findings. The study's geographical focus on England, while logical given the project's specificity, also meant that study did not fully address the FA's depiction in foreign media. This means the findings may not fully account for international perceptions or the global impact of English women's football marketing. The study operated within the temporal constraints of major tournaments and the WSL seasons between early 2022 and late 2023, meaning long-term cultural shifts possibly catalyzed by said marketing efforts were beyond the study's scope. Lastly, I conducted this project during a nine-month timeline, meaning that resource limitations such as time, budget, and access to a broader array of marketing materials could have enabled a richer set of data and potentially yielded additional insights.

This research opens avenues for pivotal further inquiry. There remains a vast expanse of ground to explore how marketing not only reflects but actively affects the growth and development of the women's game in England. A longitudinal analysis could provide insights into the tangible impact of marketing on factors such as grassroots participation, public investment, and societal attitudes towards women's football. Furthermore, extending this

framework to other women's sports within the UK could reveal whether these marketing strategies can be repurposed and whether the success of women's football is an anomaly or a pioneer of a broader trend.

### *The Lionesses' Legacy*

Through subsequent application of learned principles, the narrative of women's sports can continue its ascendant trajectory. The Lionesses have marked a trail not only for women's football but for all women's sports to emerge as sporting phenomena with robust cultural influence and profound societal implications. As programs around the world look to create or revamp their women's sports initiatives, England's blueprint offers a vision of how a nation can rally to elevate women's sports, signaling a path laden with potential for countries willing to invest in and integrate these models.

This research delves into the cultural perceptions and acceptance of women's football in England, reflecting its growing relevance in global sports discourse. The study underscores the expanding presence of women's football in sports media and marketing, particularly through the prism of social media. It enriches the broader dialogue around women's football by providing specific insights that connect the well-researched realm of men's football with the burgeoning interest in women's sporting events. In the exploration of the nexus between marketing and women's football in England, the results of this thesis are optimistic, laying foundation for addressing a pressing question: how can the principles underpinning the success of women's football through strategic marketing be harnessed to herald a new era for women's sports? The answer rests in the hands of future researchers and marketers who dare to envision a level playing field where the success of one does not preclude the success of another, but rather they all flourish symbiotically under the banner of passion, inclusion, and collective triumph. This is

the true legacy of the Lionesses' ascent—a legacy of transformation, inspiration, and hope for the future of women's sports in England and across the globe.

## Appendix

Launch Date	Event Association	Company	Advertisement Title
Apr-22	Euro 2022	Xbox	The England Football Teams & Xbox: Power Your Dreams - Ella Toone
Jun-22	Euro 2022	Barclays	Barclays - It all starts with a chance
Jun-22	Euro 2022	The FA	Our England   The official England squad announcement for Women's EURO 2022
Jun-22	Euro 2022	Nike	Never Settle, Never Done: You've never seen England like this
Jul-22	Euro 2022	Nuffield Health	Higher or Lower? With England Lionesses Jill Scott, Millie Bright and Rachel Daly
Jul-22	Euro 2022	Nike	Nike: Home
Jul-22	Euro 2022	EE	Not her problem featuring Jordan Henderson, Ellen White and Lucy Bronze   EE Hope United
Jul-22	Euro 2022	Google Cloud	Google Cloud and The FA. Discover how data can help your team deliver a winning performance.
Jul-22	Euro 2022	Lucozade Sport	Lucozade Sport on X   Football is Football
Aug-22	22/23 WSL	Sky Sports	WSL is back! A new dawn for 2022/23*
Sep-22	22/23 WSL	The FA	BarclaysWSL on X   'Unstoppable'
Oct-22	22/23 WSL	BBC	BBC Women's Football Show 22/23 Season Opener
Jun-23	WWC 2023	Disney	Ella - A Modern Day Fairytale
Jul-23	WWC 2023	Nike	Like a Lioness   Nike Football
Jul-23	WWC 2023	Budweiser	Budweiser Is The Official Beer Of England
Jul-23	WWC 2023	The FA	New horizons. Same mission. One family. World Cup 2023. Let's do this.
Jul-23	WWC 2023	Google Pixel	Football on Pixel   Pixel Throwback with Lauren James
Jul-23	WWC 2023	Xero	Dream Bigger with the Lionesses   Xero
Jul-23	WWC 2023	Nuffield Health	Lionesses' Surprising TikTok Dance Skills & Empowering Girls to play Sports and Football

Jul-23	WWC 2023	KIND	Lionesses, You're Our Pride
Aug-23	WWC 2023	LG	England Women's x LG   Beth England vs. Jess Carter: The Ultimate Trio of Challenges
Sep-23	23/24 WSL	Sky Sports	Keep Up - The WSL is BACK! *
Oct-23	23/24 WSL	BBC	BBC One - The Women's Football Show (2023/24 Intro)
Oct-23	23/24 WSL	The FA	Barclays WSL 2023-24 Season Launch   Where Greatness Lives

Table 1: Advertisement List

This table lists each of the advertisements analyzed in the study, including the dates each were launched, the tournament/season it was associated with, and the company that produced it. (An asterisk indicates that a viewer from the U.S. will require a UK-based VPN to view the advertisement.

Advertisement Title	Phase 1 Codes (In Vivo)	Phase 2 Codes (Descriptive)
The England Football Teams & Xbox: Power Your Dreams - Ella Toone	dream, belief, family, drive, support, encourage, pride, break, barriers, win, power, sacrifice	de-stigmatization, ambition, foundation, determination, inspiration, hometown
Barclays - It all starts with a chance	start, chance, commitment, equal, access, inspire	equality, involvement, youth, opportunity, legacy, dream, grassroots
Our England   The official England squad announcement for Women's EURO 2022	family, belong, squad, dream, lioness, barriers, history, teammates, friends, fearless, sacrifice, hope, pride, community, united, unstoppable, unapologetic, vision, inseparable, together	represent, camaraderie, teamwork, inspiration, idol, support, creativity, support, patriotism
Never Settle, Never Done: You've never seen England like this	icon, power, defense	pride, idol, monumental, fascination, impressive, striking, community, pride, glory, interconnection
Higher or Lower? With England Lionesses Jill Scott, Millie Bright, and Rachel Daly	health, pressure, international, belief, physical, goals, exercise, play, fun, love, score, winner, unbelievable	relatable, competitive, accomplishment, memory, moment, active, altruism

Nike: Home	home, celebrate, moments, history-making, record-breaking, champion, victory	glory, pride, patriotism, historic, inspiration, support, honor, icon
Not her problem featuring Jordan Henderson, Ellen White and Lucy Bronze   EE Hope United	squad, stronger, competition, sexist, hate, problem, tackle, hope, united	activism, feminism, together, cooperation, toughness, grit, sacrifice, collaboration, equality
Google Cloud and The FA. Discover how data can help your team deliver a winning performance.	worship, powerful, success, insight, training, impressive, push, win, zone, focus, strength, peak, performance, quality	determination, commitment, tactical, competitive, innovation, technology, outperform
Lucozade Sport on X   Football is Football	player, match, goal, dedication, sacrifice, hurt, winning, home, team, proud	equality, support, together, everyone, de-stigmatization, legacy
WSL is back! A new dawn for 2022/23*	new, dawn, day, life, feeling, good	confidence, goals, idols, activism, representation, pride, celebration
BarclaysWSL on X   'Unstoppable'	champions, togetherness, world-class, unpredictable, unmissable, unstoppable	style, creativity, excitement, moments, idols, pride, competitive, energy, momentum
BBC Women's Football Show 2022/23 Season Opener	reason, emotions, records, home, future, follow, footsteps, change, forever, incredible, club, brilliant	momentum, history-making, moments, legacy, support, inspire, local, pride, celebration
Ella - A Modern Day Fairytale	active, confidence, friends, everyone, determined, lioness, dreams, possibility, performance, passion	dream, equality, inspire, legacy, grassroots, opportunity, inclusivity, idols, pride, belief
Like a Lioness   Nike Football	tough, levels, flex, raise, fight, rep, change, game, against, grain, lead	represent, strength, pride, disruption, trendy, creativity, limitless, culture, icon, courage
Budweiser Is The Official Beer Of England	official, chase, greatness	history, legacy, identity, patriotism, icons, represent, pride, support
New horizons. Same mission. One family. World Cup 2023. Let's do this.	home, champions, story, conquer, rally, together, country, team, cheer, loudest, proudest, flag, lions, support, horizons, mission, family	momentum, history-making, moments, legacy, support, inspire, local, pride, celebration, patriotism
Football on Pixel   Pixel Throwback with Lauren James	throwback, opposition, dribble, strong	dream, legacy, inspire, memory, superstition,



		determination, commitment, family
Dream Bigger with the Lionesses   Xero	dreams, release, support, proud, family, heart, love, fan, future, excitement, pinnacle, special, squad, international, memories, flag, celebrate, inspire	glory, relatability, pride, local, club, legacy, support, momentum, honor
Lionesses' Surprising TikTok Dance Skills & Empowering Girls to play Sports and Football	fun, friends, exercise, lads, school, escape, opportunities, participate, team, setbacks, drive, purpose, skills	relatability, inspire, equality, activism, feminism, inclusivity, dream, determination, belonging
Lionesses, You're Our Pride	confidence, club, admire, moments, fuel, family, support, interact, positive, vibes, socials, nation, unmissable, lioness, pride, impact	legacy, honor, impact, momentum, believe, growth, community, monumental
England Women's x LG   Beth England vs. Jess Carter: The Ultimate Trio of Challenges	challenges, ultimate, player, skills, shootout, confidence, effort	relatability, competitive, altruism, memories, moments, camaraderie
Keep Up - The WSL is BACK! *	fire, history, fans, trends, quicker, big, power, season, major, ballplayer, best	culture, current, trendy, inner-city, style, social media, creativity
BBC One - The Women's Football Show (2023/24 Intro)	women, champions, city, club	creativity, icons, celebration, excitement, fascination, local, pride, spectacular
Barclays WSL 2023-24 Season Launch   Where Greatness Lives	world-stage, world-class, superstars, ready, greatness, lives, new, season, drop	unique, trendy, creativity, icons, momentum, excitement, spectacular

Table 2: Data Collection

This table lists the codes for both the in vivo and descriptive coding phases for the data collection process.

Code	Frequency
legacy, follow, footsteps, impact, future, change, disruption, momentum	25
moment(s), story, history/historic/history-making, memory/memories, forever, throwback	23

pride/proud/proudest, honor	21
tackle, setbacks, fight, conquer, challenges, chase, grain, hurt, sacrifice, pressure, physical, barriers, break	17
power/powerful, fearless, unapologetic, tough/toughness grit, courage, confidence, passion, fire, energy	16
team/teamwork/teammates, squad, together/togetherness, united	15
altruism, feminism, inclusivity, activism, de-stigmatization, sexist, equal/equality, hate, everyone, women, problem	15
support, fan/fans	14
creativity, trendy/trends, current, style, vibes, drop	14
dream/dreams, belief/believe, hope	14
local, community, city/inner-city, club, hometown	14
celebration/celebrate, excitement, rally, cheer, loudest	13
determination/determined, ambition, drive, dedication, commitment	12
patriotism, nation, home, lives, culture	12
inspire/inspiration, lead	11
icon(s), idol(s), superstars, admire, worship	11
success, accomplishment, peak, pinnacle, best, ultimate, outperform/performance, greatness	10
encourage, start, chance, access, participate, opportunity/opportunities, possibility	9
impressive, monumental, unbelievable, striking, brilliant, incredible, special, unique	9
win/winner, victory, glory	7
competitive/competition, opposition, defense	7
family, foundation	7
represent/rep/representation, identity, official	7
interconnection, cooperation, collaboration, camaraderie, inseparable, interact	7
stronger/strong, flex, effort, push, raise, quicker	7
fascination, spectacular, unmissable	6
play, fun, release, escape, positive	6
active, exercise, health	5
international, world-stage, world-class	5
love, heart, emotions, feeling	5
grassroots, youth, school, growth	5
match, game, season, training	5
innovation, technology, levels, tactical, insight	5
skills, dribble, score, shootout	5
mission, vision, horizons, purpose, reason	5
lioness/lions	4
friends/lads	4
champion/champions	4

relatability/relatable	4
unstoppable, limitless, unpredictable	4
new, dawn, day, life	4
big, major, good, quality	4
goal/goals	3
flag, country	3
player, ballplayer	3
zone, focus, ready	3
belong/belonging	2
record-breaking/records	2
socials/social media	2
superstition	1

Table 3: Codes & Frequencies

This table shows the frequency of each code mentioned in the data collection phase.

Themes	Categories	Code	
<b>PRIDE</b>	pride (country vs. club)	pride/proud/proudest, honor	
		patriotism, nation, home, lives, culture	
		represent/rep/representation, identity, official	
		international, world-stage, world-class	
		lioness/lions	
		local, community, city/inner-city, club, hometown	
	fan support	flag, country	
		support, fan/fans	
		celebration/celebrate, excitement, rally, cheer, loudest	
		family, foundation	
		love, heart, emotions, feeling	
		spectacle	impressive, monumental, unbelievable, striking, brilliant, incredible, special, unique
			fascination, spectacular, unmissable
unstoppable, limitless, unpredictable			
big, major, good, quality			
<b>ACHIEVEMENT</b>	vision	win/winner, victory, glory	
		champion/champions	

	teamwork	team/teamwork/teammates, squad, together/togetherness, united
		interconnection, cooperation, collaboration, camaraderie, inseparable, interact
	competition	match, game, season, training
		skills, dribble, score, shootout
		competitive/competition, opposition, defense
	determination	power/powerful, fearless, unapologetic, tough/toughness grit, courage, confidence, passion, fire, energy
		determination/determined, ambition, drive, dedication, commitment
		zone, focus, ready
		stronger/strong, flex, effort, push, raise, quicker
		player, ballplayer
	team success	success, accomplishment, peak, pinnacle, best, ultimate, outperform/performance, greatness
		record-breaking/records
		moment(s), story, history/historic/history-making, memory/memories, forever, throwback
		win/winner, victory, glory
		champion/champions
<b>WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT</b>	youth access	active, exercise, health
		play, fun, release, escape, positive
		grassroots, youth, school, growth
		encourage, start, chance, access, participate, opportunity/opportunities, possibility
		friends/lads
	pushing boundaries	legacy, follow, footsteps, impact, future, change, disruption, momentum
		new, dawn, day, life
		tackle, setbacks, fight, conquer, challenges, chase, grain, hurt, sacrifice, pressure, physical, barriers, break
	combatting sexism	altruism, feminism, inclusivity, activism, de-stigmatization, sexist, equal/equality, hate, everyone, women, problem
		belong/belonging
<b>CELEBRITY CULTURE</b>	inspiration	inspire/inspiration, lead
		icon(s), idol(s), superstars, admire, worship
		dream/dreams, belief/believe, hope

	off-field characteristics	reliability/reliable
		superstition
	pop culture	creativity, trendy/trends, current, style, vibes, drop
		innovation, technology, levels, tactical, insight
		socials/social media

Table 4: Themes & Categories

This table shows how each code was placed within one of the fourteen categories and how each of the categories combine into one of the four themes.

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