

Emotional connection to women's sports offers sponsors greater chance of success

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True North's BenchMark Emotional Connection Index evaluated more than 800 sponsors and found four of the top five league sponsors experienced the most positive reactions to their sponsorship of Super Netball.

Suncorp Super Netball was the professional league Australians felt most emotionally connected to once familiar with it. The league was also the most respected of 12 major competitions, including AFL, NRL, NBL and A-League, and ranked in the top three for values of enjoyment, trust, pride and bond.

Suncorp was the only sponsor to rank in the top 12 brands for both most recognised league sponsor and most positive reaction to a sponsor.

The Matildas soccer team was the most loved national sports team.

The results found women's teams excelled in fostering emotional connections, particularly for "trust to uphold the integrity of the sport".

True North Research director Georgie Maynard said women's teams and leagues had strong emotional connections, which translated to greater sponsor outcomes.

"The challenge remains to get more mainstream airtime and attention to broaden their appeal and reach a larger audience. If women's teams and leagues can continue to grow their familiarity, then only greater rewards will await their sponsors," Maynard said.

Suncorp Super Netball CEO Chris Symington said the data acknowledged fans' passion for Australian netball.

"Commercially, the results are recognition of the strong alignment and value proposition netball provides brands that want to connect to women and girls and establish genuine partnerships," he said.

Other teams performing well in the index included the Australian men's cricket test team, which returned from last place among 13 national sides last year to claim eighth place in 2019.

The Big Bash cricket league saw every team across both the men's and women's leagues achieving an above-average result for emotional connection to Australian audiences. The Sydney Sixers claimed the top spot for most loved league team.

Maynard stressed the importance of emotional connection in sports sponsorship.

"We are not logical when it comes to sport. Our emotions drive our decisions around whether we attend a game, watch games on TV, [or] engage with a team's sponsors, because sport is emotional, and we thrive off the thrill that sport delivers," she said.

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