

Data suggests social media has important role to play in raising the profile of women's sports

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More than 17 million viewers tuned in to see England's historic win over Germany in the Women's Euros 2022 last month, and 87,192 fans

watched it live at Wembley Stadium.

But despite the event breaking TV and attendance records, data analysts believe [social media platforms](#) could be doing more to help raise the profile of the women's game, as well as other female sports.

Data analysts from the University of Portsmouth and Oxford Brookes University have found the Women's Euros 2022 final generated 371,000 tweets in total (pre, during and post-game), with 168,000 of these generated post-match up until 4pm the following day. This is significantly less than the men's final last year, which generated 2.2m in total (pre, during and post-game), and 1.7m post-match up until 4pm the following day.

[Analysis carried out last year](#) monitoring the activity on Twitter of the hashtag #Euro2020final revealed the huge engagement surrounding England's defeat was largely driven by the online racist abuse experienced by Bukayo Saka, Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho.

Dr. Nigel Williams, Reader in Project Management at University of Portsmouth, said: "The comparison of the 2021 and 2022 Euros illustrate the impact of social media on our public discourse.

"Even though this year's outcome was a historic victory, the actions of a few in the aftermath of a 2021 loss was able to dominate the headlines to the point where the Prime Minister had to comment on it. The firestorm that emerged was irresistible to both Twitter users and [traditional media](#) who fed each other for days afterwards.

"For the specific case of women's sport, we need to examine how we work with the nature of social media amplification to ensure that these athletes get the attention that they deserve."

Dr. Nicole Ferdinand, Senior Lecturer in Events Management at Oxford Brookes University, added: "Perhaps the most important distinction between the two sets of data is the absence of a major social media event this year, which could become a lightning rod for retweets and reactions.

"In the case of the Euro 2020, this came in the form of the online abuse aimed at England's Black players which was met with swift and widespread condemnation. One could perhaps argue that the victory in itself which finally 'brought football home' should have done this, but it did not have that resonance."

Dr. Williams and Dr. Ferdinand believe the data has highlighted some clear differences that could potentially be studied and perhaps form the basis of a social media strategy which would generate greater levels of online interest in women's sporting events.

They recommend a two-pronged approach of firstly, crafting "off the pitch" stories which affect Twitter users at a primal level so that they trigger reactions and retweets and secondly, deliberately courting the online attention of mainstream media who are critical actors in social media networks.

"Mainstream media involvement is often what causes an online media event to become viral and cross over to become mainstream news," added Dr. Ferdinand.

"When this happens the number of social media users tweeting about women's sporting events will dramatically increase which in turn will translate into the volume of social media traffic generated getting to a level which is comparable to what is generated during men's events."

Provided by University of Portsmouth

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