

Women's soccer rated as highly as men's

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Women's soccer is booming and breaking records in fan interest, attendance and revenue. And yet, the women's events are still lagging behind. Whether you look at coverage, investment or revenue, men's soccer fares better than women's. But why is this?

"Many people assume that men's sports are simply better than [women's](#) sports because men tend to be taller, stronger and faster," says Carlos Gomez, a researcher at the Department of Business Administration and author of the study. "However, the existence of stereotypes should alert us to another possibility: what if perceived quality is filtered through [gender stereotypes](#)?"

In sports, as well as in other male-dominated occupations, the skills of female athletes are closely scrutinized, and women are routinely faced with criticisms of their talent and toughness. While sexist comments claiming that women's sports is boring, slow and unattractive have become less widespread and accepted than in the past, they do still exist.

Combined with poor coverage and lower investment, these stereotypes can make women's sports appear boring compared to men's sports and negatively affect how we perceive the quality of the athletes' performances.

Morgan or Modrić? No matter!

Researchers at UZH have now investigated whether people rate the quality of women's and men's [soccer](#) differently if the players' [gender](#) can't be identified. They conducted an experiment in which 613 participants were shown videos of professional women's and men's soccer players scoring goals, including the likes of Alex Morgan and Luka Modrić.

In one group, the gender of the players was blurred, making it impossible for a viewer to know if they were watching men or women. In the [control group](#), the videos were unmodified. The participants watched five videos of male players and female players each and then rated the players' performance on a five-point scale.

Untapped potential in women's soccer

The results show that the videos showing men were rated significantly higher only when participants were able to tell the players' gender. However, when the videos were blurred and the players' gender unrecognizable, participants' ratings didn't differ significantly between men's and women's videos.

"Our results refute the assumption that low demand for women's professional soccer is based on the quality of the female players' performances," says Carlos Gomez. The study suggests that women's soccer and probably other women's team sports haven't yet reached their full economic potential. While [anticipation](#) for the Women's World Cup is growing, the study could make an important contribution to shedding new light on discussions about the quality of women's soccer.

The findings are published in the journal *Sport Management Review*.

More information: Carlos Gomez-Gonzalez et al, Gender information and perceived quality: An experiment with professional soccer performance, *Sport Management Review* (2023). [DOI: 10.1080/14413523.2023.2233341](#)

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