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**How To Influence Targeted National Cricket Federations To Invest More In Their National Women's  
Cricket Teams**

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# Abstract

This research explores how the International Cricket Council (ICC) can influence targeted Full Member National Federations (NFs) to invest more in their national women's cricket teams, in line with women's cricket being one of the ICC's strategic priorities and gender equality being enshrined in the Olympic Charter. The approach to do so is by demonstrating that with certain steps, women's cricket can generate sustainable revenue for the NF.

With increasing global attention and successful commercial events like ICC Women's World Cups and the Women's Premier League, there is a strong business case to increase investment in the women's game and create sustainable growth.

Drawing on a comprehensive literature review and thematic analysis of 10 qualitative interviews with stakeholders from leading cricket bodies across developed and developing countries, this report identifies key areas critical to unlocking revenue: high-performance systems, domestic structures, cultural barriers, sponsorship, visibility, social media, ticketing, and IF interventions.

Findings confirm that commercial returns from women's cricket are increasing, with the potential to generate substantial revenue when preceded by deliberate and strategic investment, while currently remaining in an investment phase.

The research recommends actionable strategies for both ICC and NFs, focusing on visibility, scheduling, and differentiated sponsorship packaging. The report includes an action plan aligned with these recommendations.

This research provides a roadmap for sustainable commercial growth of women's cricket, while offering replicable insights for women's sport more broadly. It underscores the economic and societal value of treating women's cricket as an independent, investable product.

## Résumé

Cette recherche explore comment le Conseil International du Cricket (ICC) peut influencer certaines Fédérations Nationales membres de plein droit (NFs) à investir davantage dans leurs équipes nationales féminines, en accord avec la priorité stratégique de l'ICC pour le cricket féminin et le principe d'égalité des sexes inscrit dans la Charte Olympique. L'approche adoptée consiste à démontrer qu'avec certaines mesures, le cricket féminin peut générer des revenus durables pour les NFs.

Avec une attention mondiale croissante et des événements commerciaux à succès tels que les Coupes du Monde Féminines de l'ICC et la Women's Premier League, il existe un solide argument commercial en faveur d'un investissement accru dans le cricket féminin pour assurer une croissance durable.

S'appuyant sur une revue de littérature approfondie et une analyse thématique de dix entretiens qualitatifs avec des acteurs clés du cricket issus de pays développés et en développement, ce rapport identifie les domaines essentiels au développement de revenus : systèmes de haute performance, structures domestiques, barrières culturelles, commandites, visibilité, médias sociaux, billetterie, et interventions de l'IF.

Les résultats confirment que les revenus commerciaux du cricket féminin sont en augmentation, avec un fort potentiel lorsqu'ils sont précédés d'investissements stratégiques, bien que le sport reste actuellement dans une phase d'investissement.

La recherche formule des recommandations concrètes pour l'ICC et les NFs, en mettant l'accent sur la visibilité, la programmation et les stratégies de commandites différenciées. Un plan d'action accompagne ces recommandations.

Cette étude propose une feuille de route pour une croissance commerciale durable du cricket féminin, et offre des enseignements transposables à l'ensemble du sport féminin. Elle souligne la valeur économique et sociétale du traitement du cricket féminin comme un produit indépendant et digne d'investissement.

# Chapter 1- Introduction

On International Women's Day 2025, the International Cricket Council (ICC) made history: they announced that they had secured their first-ever sponsorship for women's cricket events, when Unilever were announced as commercial partners for women's World Cups through their brand Rexona. It was validation for an organisation that had taken a strategic decision to seek separate sponsors for men's and women's events in some categories only a year previously.

The ICC is the international federation for cricket, a sport loved by more than one billion fans (ICC, 2018) across the globe. Cricket first featured in the Olympics in the year 1900, and will make a re-entry into the Olympic universe at the LA28 Games. The ICC's strategy calls out 'pursuing inclusion as a core Olympic sport' as one of its priorities. Cricket is played at the international level in three formats, Test (multi-day, typically up to five), 50-over (One Day) and 20-over (Twenty20 or T20). It is this last format that is the most popular globally, and will be played at the Olympics.

Women's cricket has a long and proud history. It is believed that overarm bowling, the form of bowling practiced in elite cricket today, was invented by a woman, as she could not bowl underarm in the manner of the time due to her skirt (Cricinfo, 2009). Cricket's first ever World Cup was a Women's World Cup, played in 1973, two years before the first men's World Cup (ICC, 2023). And the first double century (200 runs) in cricket was scored by a woman.

Women's cricket only came into the ICC fold in 2005, and it was not until 2009 that the ICC organised its first women's cricket World Cup. Until then, women's cricket was administered by another international federation, and similarly, many National Federations (known in cricket as Member Boards) also had parallel cricket administrations for women's cricket (ICC, 2009). And so women's cricket did not directly benefit from the rapid commercialisation of men's cricket that began in the '90s, driven by the expansion of cable television in the subcontinent, particularly in the large Indian market (Caravan, 2002).

Since then, women's cricket has made incredible progress, perhaps best portrayed by attendance figures at the last few women's World Cup finals: 21,457 people attended the final in 2024 (ICC, 2024), 12,782 people in 2023 (CSA, 2023), both sold out stadiums, both remarkable figures considering women's cricket had never been ticketed in the countries hosting those finals before that (UAE and South Africa respectively). The crescendo came in 2020, when the Women's T20 World Cup final in Melbourne attracted 86,174 people (ICC, 2020), placing the Final in the same conversation as the biggest women's sports events in the world.

The ICC is a Member's body, with two levels of Membership- Full and Associate Members. The ICC is also not-for-profit: all surplus revenue made from the sale of media rights and sponsorships from ICC World Cups is redistributed to Members (ICC, 2024). This revenue is large: eight-year media deals starting 2007 and 2015 were reportedly valued at US\$ 1.1 billion (Cricinfo, 2006) and US\$ 1.9 billion, and a four-year media rights deal (only for the Indian market) starting 2024 reportedly brought in US\$ 3 billion in revenue (Sports Pro, 2022).

With the Olympics having enshrined gender equality in its Charter, and women's cricket being one of the strategic priorities identified by the ICC, the IF continuously works with the NFs to align their investment to the strategic priorities of the IF.

## Research Question:

To help the IF achieve the above, the research question chosen here is “How to influence targeted national cricket federations to invest more in their national women’s cricket teams?”

The chosen approach to influence these NFs is by demonstrating that there is money on the table: That women’s cricket can and will bring in revenue for the NF in the short and long term and therefore justifies significant investment from the NF.

The targeted NFs here are those Full Members who are yet to generate significant revenue from their women’s team. Full Members are chosen here since they receive the lion’s share of ICC distributions. Many Full Members also have other large revenue streams. But as outlined above, the IF does not have authority to dictate how those distributions are invested.

The approach taken to influence these NFs is by researching and demonstrating how other Full Member NFs have been able to generate revenue from their women’s teams, and provide practical recommendations for target NFs to do so.



## Chapter 2- Literature Review

### Introduction to literature review:

This review will look to identify existing research that answers the research question.

This review looks to acknowledge that the generation of revenue is a necessity for a sports team, and will show how this is still a challenge, especially so for women's sports teams, even in some of the most mature women's sports markets. This is due - in part- to a number of barriers that exist for women in sport, and the review will examine what some of those are, and also in the context of cricket. It will analyse trends of what leads to revenue generation, in particular looking into investment that removes barriers.

The review will examine existing research to identify practices that contribute to revenue creation, and will examine what some of the likely effects of implementing these may be.

It will depend heavily on literature from women's sports other than cricket, recognising a lack of research in cricket and especially women's cricket.

### Importance of revenue generation

For any commercial enterprise to succeed, and be considered sustainable, it must earn revenue. This is also true of sport. "In general, it can be said that today sports cannot survive without income generation." (Lababaf & Khodaparast, 2023,, p. 2)

And yet within sport [not just women's sport], there are a number of examples of sports teams that have folded due to a lack of revenue generation. Today, the NFL is a commercially successful sporting league, but as recounted in the book 'Hail Mary: The Rise and Fall of the National Women's Football League', "... the NFL began in 1920 and in the first decade of its existence, there were over forty teams. Ninety percent of those teams failed." (Frankie de la Cretaz & D'Arcangelo, 2021, p. 3349)

The importance of revenue generation for women's sport today is borne out by the priority it receives in strategy documents of leading sporting organisations. In the foreword to the UEFA Women's Football Strategy released in 2024, Aleksander Čerčin, UEFA President is quoted as saying, "We will encourage the development of professional, financially sustainable leagues across Europe, fostering the long-term success of our world-class competitions and welcoming more fans to an incredibly devoted and loyal base. We do this not just to lay the groundwork for a sustainable future but to unlock the full potential of women's football." In the same document, Managing Director of Women's Football Nadine Kessler notes that "...and while our current "purpose over profit" mission remains, the goal must be to make "profit to drive purpose" or, put simply, to be financially sustainable and reinvest back into the game, to establish the women's football industry." (UEFA, 2024)

Similarly within cricket, some NFs have called out commercial sustainability of women's teams as a priority. Cricket Australia's 10-year Women and Girls Action Plan, released in 2024, identifies 'Commercial-Thriving commercial products, generating revenues that sustain the sport' as one of five aspirations, with a target metric of growing revenue from a current AU\$ 21 million to AU\$ 121 million in a 10-year period. (Cricket Australia, 2024)

## Revenue generation is still a challenge (the floor is low)

The literature shows that revenue generation is still a challenge for women's sport.

European women's football can be considered to be one of the most successful women's sporting ecosystems, with European clubs contributing 56% of all players who participated in the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023. (UEFA, 2024) However, even within such a system, in a review of the support offered by European National Associations to Women's National Team Players, 27 National Associations within UEFA reported having no revenue streams outside of sponsorship. (Froidevaux, Berthoud, & Hickey, 2021)

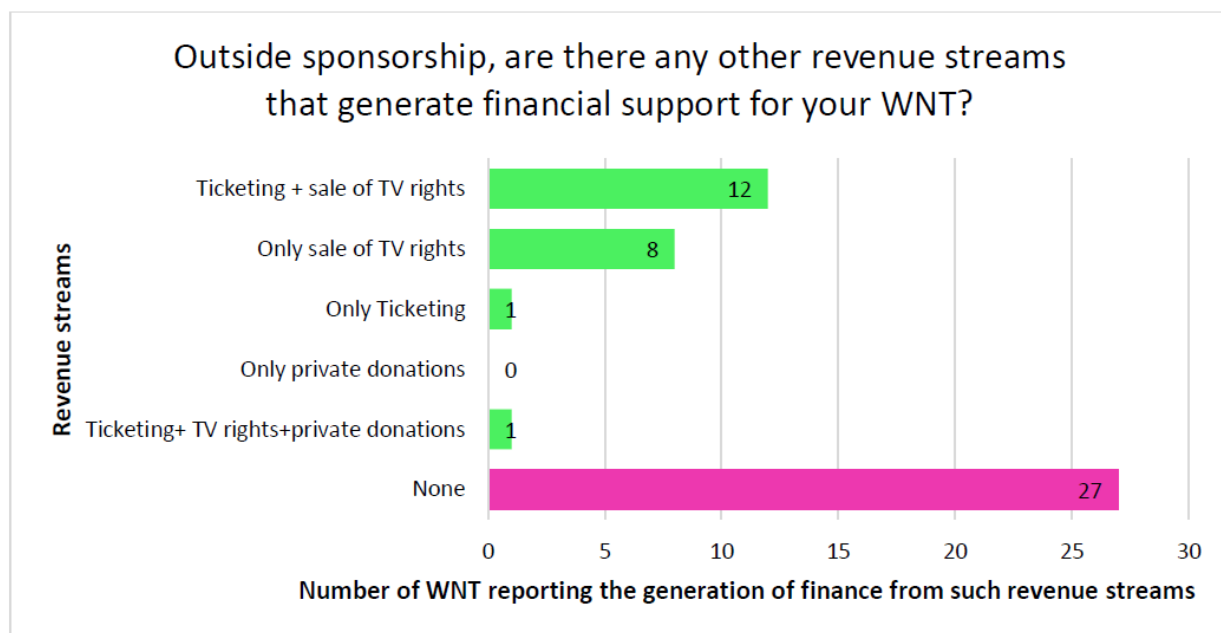


Figure 3.3.1: Other revenue streams outside sponsorship

Figure 1

Even within sponsorship, national associations were asked to provide the number of sponsors at the disposal of their women's national team, and to what extent these sponsors were shared with men's national team. More than 60% of women's national teams reported not having their own dedicated sponsors and 29% of WNTs reported not having sponsors at all. (Froidevaux, Berthoud, & Hickey, 2021)

## Women's sport has potential (the ceiling is high)

The high ceiling of revenue potential is most notably demonstrated in cricket, by the most valuable women's T20 franchise league, India's Women's Premier League (WPL). The WPL reported a generation of US\$ 44 million in surplus after its inaugural 2023 season. (Board of Control for Cricket in India, 2023). The 2024 season saw multiple sold out games even with an

increase in venues, with higher attendance than the 2023 season, lifting the valuation of the league by 6.7% to US\$ 160 million (D & P India Advisory, 2024). Through a combination of media rights and revenue generated by sale of franchises, both totalling US\$ 688 million, the WPL is estimated to be as the second most valuable women's sports league in the world, after only the WNBA (Forbes, 2024).

Those numbers sit alongside a growing body of research indicating the potential in women's sport. A Nielsen survey across eight markets reported that 84% of general sports fans have an interest in women's sports. Women's cricket's potential fan base measured in at 46 million (Nielsen, 2018).

A 2023 survey of the UK sports sponsorship market found that "The highest profile women's sport properties generate awareness levels for sponsors equivalent to major men's sport properties." They listed O2's partnership with the Red Roses [England women's rugby]] as the top performing dedicated women's sport sponsorship, with 28% awareness level, above the awareness norm of 20% of the 20 sponsorships tested (Women's Sports Trust, 2023).

## Barriers for women's sport exist.

The preceding section shows that revenue generation is possible. But to do so, it is essential to recognise and overcome the barriers that exist within those sports and societies. Since the target audience for this research is mid-ranked national cricket federations, many of which are from South Asian countries, barriers to women's participation in cricket and sport in India are examined.

The research paper in women's cricket, 'An Equal Hue: The way forward for the women in blue', published in 2020 and co-authored by this researcher, reported one such barrier as cultural. In a survey of 356 state-level cricketers, 20% of the players surveyed reported having been discouraged by immediate family members from playing cricket. This number rose to 33% when the question was widened to extended family and neighbours. The authors noted, "If one in three women who have reached their state teams has faced discouragement from society, it is the logical conclusion that there are countless others who never make it to the field because of cultural barriers." (Pradhan, Patnaik, & Keshav, 2020)

Research conducted with a wider lens examining female participation in sport in India identified more significant barriers. A study commissioned by the National Commission for Women summarised that "married women find it nearly impossible to juggle household work and childcare with leisure sports, let alone a professional sporting career. In middle and low-income households, a married woman's desire to play sports is met with disapproval and resistance from the husband and rest of the family regarding who will take over the woman's care duties." (National Commission for Women, 2005)

Another barrier identified by Pradhan, Patnaik and Keshav was financial barriers. 56.9% of the same cohort reported being unable to cover the cost of their equipment from the match fees earned by representing their state cricket team (Pradhan, Patnaik, & Keshav, 2020).

## Teams/leagues that have unlocked revenue have invested first

The literature indicates that organisations/teams/leagues that have been able to unlock revenue, have first invested in removing some of these barriers, and an example exists within cricket. In 2022, the Board for control of Cricket in India (BCCI), the governing body for cricket in India, increased match fees for state-level women cricketers by 60%, from INR 12,500 to INR 20,000 per match (Cricinfo, 2022). The same year, they equalised match fees for male and female international cricketers (Board for Control of Cricket in India, 2022). The WPL and its record valuation followed in 2023.

## What are the interventions that can unlock revenue?

While all previous topics in the literature review address the research question indirectly, there is some research that addresses the question more directly.

A study by the University of Isfahan, Iran floated a questionnaire to “members of the board of directors, marketing and public relations experts of large industries active in the field of sports financial support in Isfahan province, and members of the faculty of sports management,” and used a hierarchal analysis process to analyse 205 responses. The responses are presented in the table below:

**Table 6- Factors affecting the development of women's professional sports income generation based on the confirmatory factor analysis test**

Row	Factors	Standard regression weight
<b>Media-advertising factors</b>		
1	Using the potential of the media to brand female professional athletes	0.682
2	Detailed news coverage of women's professional sports	0.843
3	Media coverage of women's sports events, which is done with the observance of hijab	0.797
4	The existence of specialized women's professional sports programs in the media	0.821
5	Urban advertising of women's sports events	0.818
6	Promotion of women's sports events by traditional media (television, radio...) and social networks	0.833
<b>Legal factors</b>		
7	Clear and supportive rules in the field of branding of female professional athletes	0.687
8	Creating tax exemptions and key incentives for financial sponsors in the women's sports sector	0.852
9	Development of supporting laws for financial sponsors of women's professional sports	0.900
10	Removing legal obstacles to support financial sponsors of women's professional sports	0.721
11	Legal incentives and incentives in the field of advertising in women's professional sports	0.771
<b>Management factors</b>		
12	Development of short-term and long-term programs, especially in the field of income generation of women's professional sports	0.770
13	Applying monitoring indicators for the necessity of private and public sector support for women's professional sports	0.818
14	The use of marketing specialists in the human resources structure of women's professional sports	0.866
15	Modeling the management of successful countries in the field of marketing and income generation of women's professional sports (countries close to the country's culture and religion)	0.847
16	Allocation of financial resources of sports organizations separately in men's and women's sections	0.921
17	Employing capable female managers in high-level management positions of sports organizations	0.868
<b>Cultural factors</b>		
18	Iranian-Islamic modeling in the field of female professional athletes	0.775
19	Globalization of Iranian-Islamic modeling in the field of female professional athletes	0.863
20	Aligning the conditions of media presentation of women's sports events with the values and norms of the society	0.921
21	Promoting a positive social attitude towards women's sports in general and women's professional sports in particular through educational platforms (education, university)	0.944
22	Promoting a positive social attitude towards women's sports in general and women's professional sports in particular through the media	0.804
<b>Key executive factors</b>		
23	Using motivators to watch women's sports events (possibility and creating conditions for the presence of children, using the appropriate time and place of the event)	0.772
24	Use the market that fits the spirit of women to earn match day earnings and commercial earnings	0.884
25	Applying appropriate measures to strengthen the audience's relationship with women's sports teams and events	0.857
26	Holding international events with Islamic countries for the possibility of media coverage and attractiveness with maximum attendance	0.890
27	Holding women's national sports events as much as possible with Islamic coverage for maximum media coverage	0.801

Figure 2

The research identified media and advertising “as one of the effective factors on the development of income generation of women's professional sports, which was prioritised as the most important factor in the prioritisation of the factors.” It was followed by management factors, “which ranked second after media and advertising factors in the prioritization of factors using the process of hierarchical analysis.” These included “formulation of short-term and long-term plans, specifically in the field of income generation of women's professional sports, modelling the management of successful countries in the field of marketing and income generation of women's professional sports, allocation of financial resources to sports organizations in a segregated form” among others. Besides these, legal factors and cultural factors were other categories in which interventions were recommended as a priority. (Labbaḡ & Khodaparast, 2023,)

Research into professional sports leagues in the USA looked at practices that increase profitability, examining ‘past women’s professional sports leagues, current professional sports leagues, sponsorship agreements, fans, social, digital, and mobile marketing strategies, and management practices’. Some of the key practices highlighted were having partnerships with men’s professional sports teams, minimizing costs, pricing strategy that allowed for dynamic and variable ticket pricing. (McArdle, 2016). All of these practices are applicable for national federations, who are responsible for operating both men’s and women’s teams

Research into women’s football in Finland has also recommended giving “women-oriented companies opportunities to reach their target audiences more effectively than when investing in sponsoring men’s football.” The author cited the example of “the first female-focused brand that sponsored a professional women’s football club was Avon partnering with Liverpool’s women’s football team in 2017. In this collaboration, the Liverpool’s women’s team also got their own separate shirt deal apart from the men’s team for the first time. Also, a campaign called “I Can Be” was launched with a mission to inspire girls and women to challenge gender stereotypes and aim for their personal goals. This success story was later recognised with the “Partnership of the Year” award at the annual international Football Business Awards. (Hakala 2020, 28-29.)” (Kalliovaara, 2024)

## What are the likely effects of those interventions?

While this research will look to identify and recommend some interventions that are specific to cricket, lessons can be drawn from literature in other sports to highlight what effects organisations can expect after such interventions begin.

A study into the “Disruptive value of the creation of the AFLW competition” observed, “The creation of the Australian Rules Football Women (AFLW) and integration of women into the AFL produced a complex organizational transition in which gender equality became visible and invisible in particular ways.” They observed the creation of ‘tensions’, expressed through an article that claimed boys programmes had been disproportionately disadvantaged by the growth of female participation programmes in AFL. “This tension is mostly unspoken, given material form in the article mentioned above, which draws on anonymous voices. This “tension,” which also slipped into the interview encounters, reveals the struggles of “doing” equality in a market-

oriented organization whose history has been entangled with sexual violence, misogyny, White male privilege, and status.” (Pavlidis, Fullagar, & O’Brien, 2023)

In the USA, a national women’s football league was established a few years after the introduction of Title IX, and similar themes are recounted in work capturing those developments. “Title IX created an attitude that is familiar today, a resentment in having to invest in both men’s and women’s sport. At the time, the attitude on campus was that the women were taking something from the men. By having to give [the women] equal money and equal sports, in some people’s eyes you’re taking something away from the men that was traditionally and rightfully theirs.” (Frankie de la Cretaz & D’Arcangelo, 2021)

### Summary:

While there is much literature that provides the socio-economic context for the need of the selected research to be undertaken, there is limited research that directly addresses the question of revenue generation in women’s sport, and no research in women’s cricket specifically on the matter. It is in the background of this existing research, that the data collection phase was undertaken.



## Chapter 3- Methodology

The research has used interviews as the data collection method. This method is chosen to collect data with more subjective detail, as different NFs have used different approaches to generate revenue from their women's national teams.

10 individuals were interviewed across seven interviews. Most of these interviews were one-on-one, while a few were group interviews, at the request of the interviewees.

A full list of interviewees and their organisation is below:

1. Representative, Women's Cricket, England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).
2. Representative, Women's Hundred, England and Wales Cricket Board.
3. Representative, Strategy department, Cricket Australia (CA).
4. Representative Strategy department, Big Bash, Cricket Australia.
5. Representative, Strategy department, Cricket Australia.
6. Representative, Broadcast department, Cricket Australia.
7. Representative, Participation, Cricket Australia.
8. Representative, Commercial department, Cricket South Africa (CSA).
9. Owner, WPL team.
10. Representative, Women Cricket department, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

These interviewees represent a wide spectrum of the women's cricket ecosystem, covering both developed and developing countries, and national leagues and franchise teams, teams that have started generating revenue, and teams that have done so to a limited extent.

### Data analysis:

Most of the data was in the form of primary data, interview transcripts. A thematic analysis of the data was carried out, to identify common topics that have emerged in the interviews, which relate to the research question.



## Chapter 4- Findings

### Revenue:

This research will look to quantify the revenue that has been generated by women's national teams, while recognising there are limitations in being able to do so.

In some instances, it is not straightforward to separate the revenue generated by women's cricket from overall revenue of both men's and women's cricket, as broadcast and sponsorship rights are often bundled. In some cases, matches are also played as double headers, meaning ticketing values are also harder to separate. An ECB representative said, *"We're trying to create and build a really dedicated P&L just for the women's game, which is easier said than done because there's a lot of deals are bundled and they are still wrapped up."* There was however an acknowledgement that women's cricket contributed to raise the value of these bundled deals, sometimes in significant ways. *"For the Hundred, none of the interest would have been as competitive or high without the women's game."*

The ECB was able to provide ticketing revenue for standalone women's international home matches from 2022, along with loose projections for how these are expected to rise up to 2031, which are used to arrive at an average ticket price.

Table 1

Year	Women's International ticket sales	(Estimated) Revenue (GBP)	Average ticket price (Estimated revenue/ticket sales, approx. GBP)
2022	51,573	763K	15
2023	121,748	1.85M	15
2024	105,023	1.61M	15
2025F	114k	1.81M	15
2026F	123k	2.15M	17
2027F	153k	2.79M	18
2028F	176k	3.73M	21
2029F	167k	3.75M	22
2030F	185k	4.7M	25
2031F	224k	6.05M	27

*[Ticket sales are based on latest attendance methodology (sold + issued).]*

Some NFs have published their revenue in publicly available documents. The Cricket Australia Women and Girls Action Plan, published in 2024 and referenced in the Literature Review, mentions a figure of AU\$ 21 million thus far, with a target to grow that revenue to AU\$ 121M in 10 years' time.

Cricket Australia were able to provide more details of that figure. *"What makes up that that \$21M of revenue, most of it comes down to sponsorship and attendance. There's been a very deliberate focus on getting paid ticketing into both our women's international games and Women's Big Bash League (WBBL). There's also some sponsorships that have been very heavily focused on the women's game, you know, Comm Bank is one over a long period of time, for example, as well as to the lead sponsor of the WBBL, Weber. There's not a significant media rights value in that AU\$ 21M. The long-term plan is really around getting our women's international and WBBL games to the point where they are major commercial properties in Australia, among the top three or four leagues, and in Australia that's like Australian Rules (Football), the Rugby League and men's Big Bash and men's international cricket."*

Across most interviewees was the acknowledgement that none of these organisations are in the green when it comes to their women's cricket, and an acknowledgement that they were still in the investment phase. While their women's cricket programmes are bringing in revenue, those revenues do lag behind expenses. An ECB representative said, *"I think that's the scary thing probably for a lot of the Members, in terms of how much it does cost. I think moving into this next phase now, in every meeting that I sit in, there's a willingness to invest, but also there is the question of 'When's it going to be commercially sustainable?' And if I'm honest, I don't know the answer to that question right now."*

## Cultural barriers

The interviews recognised a theme that was borne out by the literature review, that there are cultural barriers that hinder investment into women's sport, both from within the organisation and from the market.

### Within:

One interviewee said: *"I literally had a fight with Finance, when they would say, 'reduce the number of players, reduce the number of teams, you can't afford this or that, etc'. My reply was that the money is there, and that money is not just for the men, it's for the women as well."*

### Market:

An interviewee from Cricket South Africa revealed: *"You know, your big decision makers in corporates are predominantly male. And it's a stereotype and a generalist comment I'm going to make, but they still see women sport as the women's version of the men's game, if that makes sense. They don't see it as its own entity. So until we get to a point where they see it as its own platform and you know they'll always be a male bias towards the conversations."*

*“But what we’re seeing increasingly in this country is that there’s a lot more female CMOs coming in, a lot more female marketing managers. But society will dictate that they’re not confident and brave enough to make a decision like this, because it’s going to be under a lot of scrutiny because you can’t justify it with the metrics that everybody is accustomed to. So, it becomes a very difficult discussion when you’re saying, ‘You know, I want you to invest in this, but you’re only going to see the return in 5 years time’.”*

Another interviewee said: *“I feel like the biggest problem today -and this is a very developing country problem, I don’t know how much of this will apply to other countries- is that we are still talking to middlemen who are managing sponsors. What I mean is there are agencies that we talk to, not the brands themselves, and most of the time it is men, and a lot of them do not understand the value of a women’s sporting product.”*

An interviewee also identified factors, external and internal, which help shift the wider cultural barriers. An ECB representative described the environment when they secured their first sponsor in 2014: *“Having a player’s association was obviously useful, and having a Chair who was supportive and a senior woman on the board who people listen to was another key factor. Then there was the 2012 Olympics here. The media interest in women’s sport went through the roof on the back of those Olympics. In fact, lots of headlines called them the women’s Olympics.”*

## High Performance and Domestic Cricket

Interviewees across countries identified investment into high performance and domestic systems as a prerequisite to revenue generation, as no one will want to spend money on a sub-par product. An ECB representative said, *“It all comes down to the quality of the products that you’re putting out there. To create revenue, you need to have a spectacle, a competition, a product that people want to buy and want to watch. Commercial partners and broadcasters, yes, but actual fans as well.”* The other ECB interviewee said, *“Kia came on board as our first commercial partner (in 2014) for England women because of the central contracts, it wasn’t that we secured the Kia deal and did the contracts. We’d gone to Australia in 2013 and played well. And then we had the 2009 T20 World Cup in England, which we won. There was decent sort of coverage and profile of that series. We then played and whitewashed Australia straight after that.”*

CA echoed that sentiment, speaking about investment made into a landscape where their domestic women’s cricket is fully professional, contributing to Australia being the most successful team in women’s cricket, having won six out of the eight T20 World Cups held across the last 15 years. *“The Australian women’s team, their track record would put them with the All Blacks in terms of global dominance in the sport and it’s something we’re really proud of. It’s something we’ve communicated pretty strongly with partners and sponsors. I wouldn’t*

*underestimate the importance of the investment we've made in our players and the systems around our players since bringing women into the MOU [between players association and CA] in 2017. I don't think if that players were still at the level they were around 2014, and we're trying to drive the commercial return we're doing now, we would have bigger issues."*

*This was a theme across interviewees from developing countries too. "You know, in all my engagements with our Director of Cricket, he will talk about both teams equally. And look, their performances have helped. You know they command people's attention." Another said, "We won a series at home and we got headlines that we have never got before, so I have cuttings of our biggest newspaper with our photo on the front page. But if you are not doing well and, you don't perform, I think it is difficult to get people to invest in you."*

Interviewees were able to provide details of the investments into professionalising domestic cricket systems that enabled high performance. An ECB representative shared how, in 2016, this investment began with creating an innovative, centrally owned competition, the Kia Super League, which was very different from the men's domestic competitions of the time. *"Cricket in this country, professionally in the men's game, is organized through our 18 professional county clubs. I think having that total ownership at the centre was really, really important because it meant that we could kind of dictate what that competition looked like and what the requirements were, minimum standards. it created a high profile, and it also created the competitive best vs best environment. And Kia came on board as sponsors, then that was the first sort of programme of sponsorship for women's domestic cricket."* Despite being a new, semi-professional tournament with very few 'known' players, the average audience for its Finals in 2017 and 2018 (158K, 202K respectively) was stronger than the very well-known, high affinity men's T20 Blast average audience for group stage matches. (125K, 173K for those respective years).

ECB have since revamped their domestic structure twice more. *"In 2021 we created the regional model, which was effectively a governance structure which saw a conglomerate of the counties working together and we had these 8 regional teams. Each had a minimum of 10 cricketers contracted. Now in 2024 we've seen the evolution of that into a domestic structure 3.0, with three tiers. So Tier 1 is the eight top-tier counties. Tier 2 is the other 10 within the first-class counties, Tier 3 is the is the national counties. The Tier 1 counties, they now need to have a minimum of 15 contracted players. So we'll go from 80 domestic contracts at the end of last year to 120 this year."*

*"We invested about GBP 6 million a year into the regional structure from 2021 for 4 years, and from this year, with the domestic game 3.0, our investment is GBP 16 million it will be GBP 18 million by 2027. So it will go for a huge increase. And across those tier one counties, they are all investing their own money as well in certain ranges, anywhere between 250 to 500K they're putting in which they haven't done previously."*

Cricket Australia have strongly established domestic competition, but also stressed on investments into participation programmes to feed those competitions. *"We want to keep girls in the game as long as we possibly can, so that as we get up to the top of the tree, we have more and more options for our national teams and high-performance programs. But we're also really invested in retaining even those who won't enter the high-performance pathway, because we know societally how important it is for girls to be in sport and all the life skills that they get, it just*

*creates better communities for everyone. We also know that girls who stay in the game also become fans, so if we can retain girls in the game, that then supports the fandom stream, as commercial, which then gives us the opportunity to invest those funds back into participation."*

The theme of investing in domestic cricket is also apparent in developing markets which have started to unlock revenue, and stressed that such investments make massive changes to the socio-economic circumstances of female cricketers. *"Parents have to make decisions whether they feed their child or let them play cricket. It's as basic as that. So you know, they would rather feed their children, may be educate them or, you know, maybe feed the boys or let the boys play cricket rather than the girls. And so we realised domestic cricket contracts were necessary. Before that girls were getting injuries because their diets were not good, we have a high rate of fractures in our women's team. Even the equipment was not right since they couldn't afford it."*

The case of Cricket South Africa demonstrates a clear correlation between high performance, investment, and domestic cricket. *"At the World Cup final (2023, South Africa's first appearance in a final, which they lost), government were talking about how to help win a World Cup, and after that were very happy to assist in getting a professional domestic competition off the ground."* The government has since pledged to invest ZAR 15M over three years in the professionalisation of women's cricket. It also coincided with CSA announcing equal match fees for male and female cricketers (Cricinfo, 2024).

## Sponsorship

Most interviewees recognised that sponsorship is likely to be the first stream of revenue that is generated by a women's team, and to begin with, it may be socially-focused sponsorship, and may possibly be bundled with or linked to sponsorship of the men's team.

Cricket Australia, the team that reported generation of AU\$ 21 million in revenue so far, described a time when sponsorship value was negligible for their women's team. *"We've gone from it being almost non-existent to what I'd described as almost cause-led sponsorship, so we're sponsoring the women's team because it's seen as a good thing to do. At the first stage is when Comm Bank came on and they were sponsoring the Southern Stars, they were probably our major international sponsor (across men's cricket) and so it was a bolt on. And over time Comm Bank in particular have doubled down in the space around the women's game. And I reckon we're now on the next stage that journey towards it being a hard-core commercial property for a partner based on the eyeballs and the reach and the exposure and brand association."* Cricket Australia now have title sponsors for even their domestic T20 League, and *"there are a number of clubs that have standalone WBBL sponsors. And they have seen a significant increase in interest, but also, you know, related to the jumping off price and increased in what they're able to get for the front jersey."*

Cricket South Africa have recently taken the route of treating the women's team as a separate property, after their reached their first T20 World Cup Final in 2023. *"A packed-up Newlands stadium for that final is something I'll always remember and I think what I walked away with on that day was women's cricket is its own product. It's its own entity. I think for too long and with a number of our commercial deals before my time, it was always simply just an add on. You know what I really took from there is that you know, they positioned themselves in front of the fans, in*

*front of the private sector as their own entity, and that was really my take out from that experience."*

*This has led to a shift in approach with sponsors who have bundled sponsorship rights across both the men's and women's teams. "You know we've got a big beverage partnership being AB InBev and they've always consistently led with their male-targeted beer products, but they also offer drinks that are targeted at women. And one of the points I made was, we've got an overall partnership, but lead with a different brand when it comes to women's games rather than having one blanket brand across the business. And that's really been great because it's given a lot of the brands, a sense that you understand their world. Think about this: a guy who can afford a car, chances are they have a car. So there's very little growth from an automobile perspective. But on the female side, you know the market penetration would be at a lesser level. So I think the take out is for developing your commercial proposition: really sitting down and mapping out your different product categories, right, and you know understanding what are the key drivers in that product category and then looking back at what you offer and how you can mirror that particular product."*

*Such innovative approaches have also extended to conversations with new sponsors. "The simple reality is the proposition around women's sport is really ensuring that equality is a big, big aspect in this country. And where I have positioned it with a lot of brands is to say you know this is an investment into something meaningful rather than an immediate commercial return. They have achieved what they have achieved with a fraction of the support that that the men get. Now you can imagine what they would be able to achieve if they had, you know, half of the support that the men get. It's really about selling that that dream to say that, can you imagine what they would do if they had that support they need. They've been able to achieve so much without it, and that's really resonated with a number of brands.*

*"If you don't go and understand their perspective, that's when you're going to end up in a discussion around audiences and stadium attendance, right. And that's never going to work because they're going to give that to their media agency to evaluate and the media agency is going to come back and say 'you should put a billboard' or 'you shoot another 30 second ad, you'll get more eyeballs', right? So I think the first point now is you've got to shift the conversation completely away from the metrics that you would normally use to evaluate a commercial partnership on the men's side."*

*Pakistan Cricket Board have also found success in sponsorship focused on gender equality. "There is a trend in advertising in Pakistan in which they want women to come out into the workforce. For example, if there is a doctor, they will show the mother-in-law helping the daughter in law out with the household work. This was being brought up mostly by multinationals." Pakistan Cricket Board secured a deal with Cadbury that commissioned an emotive [ad](#) of a father buying a bat for his daughter, and featured the images of the player on chocolate packages, contributing to hero-building while also generating revenue, both for the PCB and the players directly. "They made direct deals with the girls, it was approximately PKR 500,000 and above for each girl, which was substantial. Because they have never had anything before."*

*Co-packaging product examples such as the one above emerged as a popular method of sponsorship that delivered value for both parties. It was also reported as having come up in conversation with sponsors by a Women's Premier League team. "So we actually had a few co-*



*packaging of product conversations, which I was surprised about because I thought maybe that's a few years away. But we spoke to one large snack brand earlier this year and. They were also very keen to look at can we launch namkeen packets which have your players faces with us and I thought that's really cool."*

The example above is a case where a sponsor has offered to activate the sponsorship in a big way, and this was mentioned as valuable by the same interviewee. *"Our front of jersey sponsors, they decide to activate this year in a big way. They got a lot of people to the stadium, they bought tickets (rather than ask for comps which we really appreciated), in the thousands and brought their employees wearing our jerseys, giving their workforce an offsite experience. An advantage here was that WPL tickets are priced at INR 100, which is much cheaper than what an IPL ticket would cost. They shot a bunch of campaigns, and the ads that they ran on Hotstar as well during this season, so they bought spots on digital. They bought media to activate that they paid for. So, they I would say that they spent as much to activate as they spent on the sponsorship."*

*"And that's something worth considering when choosing sponsorship. Is your goal that you need money and you don't care if they don't activate or you would like them to activate with you and then maybe part of that budget is spent towards activation so that there's recall for both of you?"*

An ECB interviewee summarised the need for both, a social and commercial appeal: *"You talk a lot about selling on emotion and rationalising on data."*

Most interviewees recognised women's cricket as the growth opportunity in the overall sponsorship landscape. *"Your media deals in the next cycle are either going to be flat or down. I think every cricket board has accepted that. Your attendance at Test matches is under pressure. Increasingly, attendance at ODIs is under pressure. T20 is still pulling in the numbers. So, where I call it out in my commercial strategy is with the men's teams, it's really about retaining the revenue streams, and the growth is going to come from women. Because your values for sponsorship and your ticketing and merchandise sales, there might be some incremental growth on the men's side, but the significant shifts are going to come from what we can do with positioning women's cricket."*

CSA have been able to use this approach to secure landmark sponsorship for the women's domestic cricket, whereas their men's domestic cricket do not have a sponsor: *"Hollywood Bets, they initially approached us and they were the first brand that I interacted with that that understood my vision. They said to me very clearly, up front, that this is not about eyeballs or audiences. They took a position as a business to say that, sport has one of the most impactful effects on society, and women's sport is under indexed right now, so they came forward and said, you know, as a business they happy to contribute in the region of half a million US\$ a year into the domestic structures. They were also very clear in that they said to us, this is where we're starting, but we are very clear that we don't want this money to go into a pot and be allocated to men's activity."*

## Visibility and social media

Most interviewees stressed the need to create visibility for the women's team as a key element required to generate long-term revenue, sometimes at the cost of forgoing immediate revenue. A Cricket Australia interviewee said, *"Strategically we've prioritized reach and exposure right now to build long term value. So we could have driven a more of a value by selling the content at a higher value, probably to pay TV. But what we prioritized and focused on is getting the game into as many households in Australia, in particular working with free-to-air broadcasting, putting a number of games, not just on free-to-air but in primetime on the main channel. This approach on broadcast is important is because this provides exposure against those sponsorship assets, so if you get just an hour on the free-to-air broadcast, you're creating sponsorship value."*

Another Cricket Australia interviewee described the journey from moving women's cricket from streaming to television. *"So for a very long time it was very much a streaming product. It wasn't seen by a lot of people. A lot of work from our broadcast and media rights team is just ensuring that we've got all of our international content is available on the same channels that we've got our men's content on. And then it's just step change. OK we had this percent this year, so how can we push them to take 40%, 50%, 60% to start to go on that main channel. And I think some of it is just educating the broadcast partners."*

*"How do we come off the back popular programming like the evening news? Maybe it means starting a match at 7:15, so you start with 500,000 viewers and then you maintain them. Then the broadcasters see the kind of ratings that come in and then that starts to help generate more and more support for those to keep going on the main channels. And so now we're at the point in the conversation where we look to ensure that all the technology in the women's game actually the same as the men's, especially when pushing a really big stadium series. Double headers make it a lot easier as we can share costs with the men's game."*

Cricket South Africa reported similar conversations with their broadcast partners but also reported a focus on non-live content. *"At the time we were in a renewal discussion with our host broadcaster, SuperSport and one of the non-negotiables that I put on the table was that all of their inbound and outbound fixtures have to be broadcast. Previously it was done on an ad hoc basis. We were also challenging SuperSport to say you know, the bulk of the sports content that you deliver is men's content, right? Importantly, outside of matchday content, all your ancillary content, it was predominantly male content. And they embarked on a very interesting campaign called "Here for Her", where they took it upon themselves to proactively profile women's sport in general, and it was fortunate that our team was doing very well, so they almost became the leading light in terms of that campaign and really driving women's sports. And we also challenged them as part of their campaign, we said, you cannot produce a lower spec product for the women. These are both international teams and in our mirroring strategy, we insisted on you know, same or similar quality production across both men and women."*

Interviewees also touched on the value of social media to boost the visibility of their women's teams. CSA continued, *"During that that 2023 World Cup, most fans didn't know the players' names. They weren't household names, right? It's only towards the back end of the tournament that people started calling their names and one of my takeouts was we haven't done the job of profiling them and showing people who they are."*



*“What we did immediately with Super Sport is we embedded a permanent videographer and photographer within the team. And there was a very specific brief. To really focus on non-live content. It was a combination of the high intensity training stuff to showcase them as you know, international athletes, but at the same time there was a very specific brief to show who they are away from the field. So a lot of humour. Showing the fun side.*

*“Another very strategic decision we made: we’ve got two Instagram handles. It’s Proteas men and Proteas women. That was also very deliberate, and it was part of building the commercial proposition is to say, you know, we don’t want to be fighting with the men’s content. We want them to have their own platform. What you’ll see on there is the storytelling in the background. That was a part of what I put forward to commercial partners, that in this world of documentaries, I’ve actually stopped all the conversation around a men’s documentary and I’ve said we are going to be the first country to go with a women’s documentary first.”*

Organisations recognised the need to drive the hero-building aspect, especially for lesser known players in each team. The WPL interviewee said, *“We understand that we have to do a lot of the heavy lifting to make these players come across as heroes to the outside world because the audience is not necessarily going out of its way to dig up stories. And there are few stories to dig up, like there are no interviews. So we are starting from a base of zero.*

*“I think for any country especially if they’ve got access to TikTok, that’s a huge opportunity for them. It’s about finding the right storytelling mechanisms and platform, and finding the right people who can tell the stories, and who will romanticize women’s cricket and women’s sports. You have to make it seem like, ‘if you’re not part of this journey, then what are you doing with your life?’ This is a very low-cost way to make content, just get a young Genz and get them on the team to do content.”*

## **Ticketing, attendances**

Match attendance, and the ability to monetise those, was mentioned by interviewees from developed countries. A Cricket Australia representative, speaking in reference to the Women’s Big Bash League, their domestic T20 competition, said, *“Ticket revenue is really important in what we do. Because it gives a direct return back to our clubs. Right now, what we’ve been talking about sponsorship, media rights, they’re big buckets, but they’re 6-7-8 years down the track. And that’s not really a direct return. What women’s sport needs in order to grow commercially is momentum. It has to be that they’re seeing a return directly and that it is growing year on year.”*

Most developed country boards have paid tickets for their women’s international matches, as they aim to put forward a product that people will value and not expect to be free, and they have slowly, year by year, increased ticket prices, while also keeping these games accessible. *“Do you make it a \$5 to get to get people in to see how good it is or is \$5 not enough that people actually care and they’re going to turn up?”*

Another CA interviewee provided more detail on ticket pricing strategies. *“This current season ticket we put for internationals at AU\$ 20. We have a competing interest of trying to fill the stadium as much as possible, so we can enjoy those other commercial streams in the long run.*

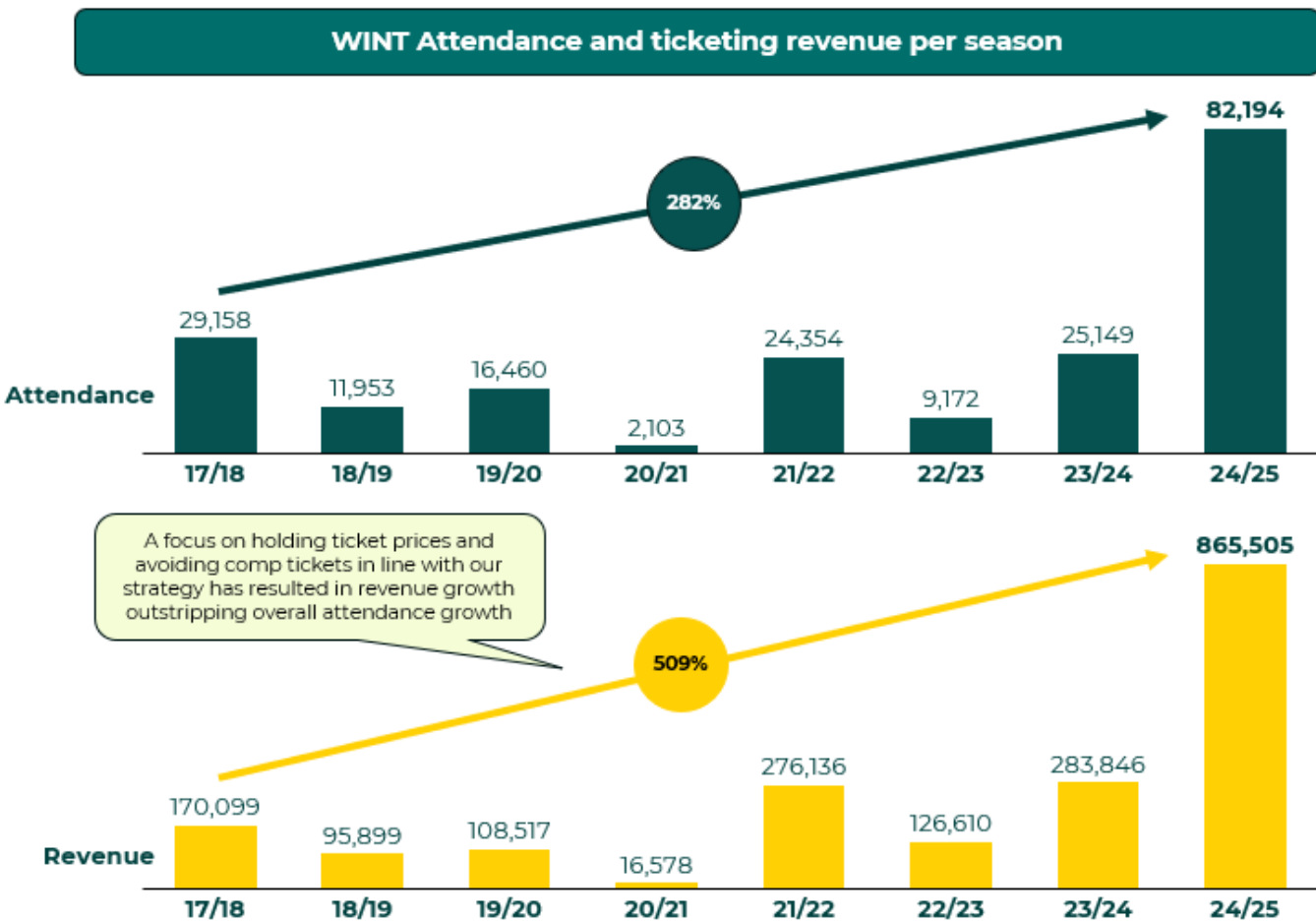
*So we have what we call our bring-a-mate offer. And so basically going one plus one free, but that just means that there is value still attached to the ticket."*

The drive to fill stadiums, combined with more matches being played at larger venues, has meant higher marketing budgets for these games, which has also driven revenue. *"We still increased a lot of the investment into the venues and play the bigger stadiums and so forth. Attendance was up three times this summer over any prior season, but we've actually increased our revenue also by three times, so we've been able to kind of hold the line as much as we possibly can whilst playing with the different levels of kind of supply and demand to get the price where we needed to get to depending on the venue."*

These marketing efforts have also seen Cricket Australia target and tap into a different audience. *"Our normal men's international gender split is 80% male, 20% female and if you're buying tickets for women's internationals it's 50-50. It's straight down the line so we can see we're getting into a very different audience. Our most popular ticket buyers this year were 18- to 34-year-olds, so we've focused quite hard in those, making the events about more than just cricket. And really trying to appeal to that market and equally we found that they're prepared to pay a little bit more for if you can make it more of an event."* A focus on maintaining ticket prices, marketing campaigns, positive in-stadium experiences, and more matches played at larger venues, have seen revenue growth (509%) outstrip attendance growth (282%) for CA over the last eight years.

# KEY DATA POINTS

## WINT Attendance



9

Figure 3

## Additional key data points

**35,365**

World Record women's Test attendance at the MCG

**\$50**

Average order value, an increase of 47% on last year at \$34

**49%**

Of all ticket buyers for WINT matches were female, compared to around 20% for MINT, highlighting this format is key to reaching a growth audience

**2.8**

Average basket size, up from 2.4 last season, and highlighting the success of the 'Bring a Mate' offer in driving growth in attendance while maintaining margin

**23%**

Return rate of ticket purchasers for women's matches, up by 2% from the year before

**46%**

Of WINT attendees also bought MINT tickets, confirming that attracting our avid cricket fans to women's games is vital to the strategy



Figure 4

Recent ICC women's events have seen similar ticketing strategies employed. At the Women's T20 World Cup hosted in United Arab Emirates in 2024, despite being a market where tickets had never been sold for women's cricket, ICC priced tickets starting at AED 5, up to AED 25 for general admission, with children getting free entry. That tournament delivered a 30% increase in attendance, with a total of 91,030 fans coming through the gates.

One of the key interventions mentioned by multiple interviewees was the use of scheduling to drive attendances. An ECB interviewee highlighted this key change: *"So when you look back at the 2019 women's schedule, the 50-over games started on a Tuesday in Leicester and then they played another 50-over game on the Thursday in Leicester. And a 50-over game on a Tuesday at a small ground during school term, that time is never going to sell you very many tickets. So, it was about looking at it like from a scheduling perspective, what does the fan want? How do we make a fan-centric schedule? So, in 2023, we thought if you start with 50-over games, that's fine, but play them on Saturdays and Sundays when people can actually go. And with the IT20s, play them in the big venues."*

The 2023 home Ashes series (traditional rivalry between England and Australia) proved to be a watershed series in terms of attendances for England women. *"So prior to that, in terms of attendances, we were hovering around 35 to 40k per year across are in the women's fixture list. That's like 3k average per game. We came up with a project, Project Bamboo we called it, bamboo being among the fastest growing organic matter on the planet. But the sentiment is about fast growing, fast moving. It was about, 'How we're going to accelerate attendance as England women?' And we just made really a bold statement that we were going to take the 2023 Ashes attendance total from 30- to-40k in 2019, and we're going to get to 100K in 2023. That's a significant change like 280% increase or something like that. What that did straight away, internally, it's just a mindset shift. You put that up there and think, right, how do we get there? What are the things we need to do? And there are some simple things right, like scheduling."*

*"Like how you can create scale is just massively important and right now where we are as a game in this country, the men's game that brings scale and women's game brings soul. So we recognised that actually having the men and the women side by side is really powerful, both from a kind of proposition around what we're trying to do around inclusion and diversity, but also from the scale that they just give you, and the event presentation and the event experience, and venues that match up to the expectation of the fans when they come into the stadium. So one of those moves, what seems like a really small tactical move we made two years ago for the women's and men's Ashes in 2023, was where we went on sale at the same time. It sounds like a really obvious thing to do but we only did them for the first time in 2023. We called it the Ashes to Ashes campaign."*

*"Ahead of that we decided, we're going to play our IT20s at Lords, at the Oval, at Edgbaston, all large stadiums, and we're going to sell 20,000 tickets to each. It meant having to explain to Leicester why they weren't going to be a women's Ashes venue and persuade Trent Bridge that they were going to have the women's Ashes test there, because that was a premium venue and that was where we needed to play."*

*"We also worked really, really closely with Sky, our primary broadcast partner to take them on the journey, recognising that not all of those slots were brilliant for them from a broadcast point of view. They were like, well, 'we can give you clean airtime if you go here'. And it's like, 'yeah, if we go there, we won't get anybody turning up'.*

*"It's just doing basic things properly. Everything that's been done in the men's game for the length of time applying those principles to the women's games."*

While the ECB have sought to align men's and women's cricket where possible, CA have taken a different approach, of providing clear spaces on the calendar for women's cricket to occupy. Even so, the sentiment of acknowledging that the men's game has a head start, was echoed by Cricket Australia. *"So, what the men's game has and the women's game doesn't is repeatability and consistency. So you will go to a Boxing Day Test match and you will go just because of the Boxing Day Test match. It doesn't really matter who's playing. The women's game doesn't have that yet."*

Scheduling has also been noted as a key driver for success in developing countries, although in those markets, it has been more focused towards viewership and sponsorship rather than attendance. A Cricket South Africa interviewee said, *"If it is streamed, which is what we've done in the past, it becomes very difficult to portray the product in a positive light. A simple example is, for a lot of your decision makers, they're not going to go onto the streaming platform to watch the game. Chances are they will catch it on SuperSport when they get home or on a Saturday or whatever it is. You almost have to go find them, if that makes sense. And when you do find them, you've got to make sure that what they see is a quality product."*

A WPL perspective also brought into focus the time of the year, when it came to selling sponsorships. *"So we've actually been pushing that WPL should happen a little bit earlier than it does. It happens in the February window now, which is end of financial year and that's not a good window to get sponsors. Nobody would imagine that the time of year has an impact on the sponsorship, but that's a huge factor because most of the budgets are locked in. A lot of money is parked between October to December. And that's when would be an ideal window. Companies that have products related to weather, so like a women's skin care brand, would have invested in a brand like ours, but because of we're in fact that's the end of the winter, they don't."*

## IF Interventions

The interviewees recognised the various interventions from the IF that have contributed to the growth of women's cricket in the past, such as the move to combine men's and women's T20 World Cups in 2009, then separate these events in 2018 once it was established as a standalone product, the first-ever marketing campaign for a women's World Cup in 2017 leading to a sold-out final even before the home team made it to the final, the creation of a first ever women's Future Tours Programme (FTP, mapping out all bilateral tours for the top 10 Members for three years) in 2022, the introduction of the women's U19 T20 World Cup in 2023, and prize money parity rolled out in 2024, making cricket the only team sport to achieve that.

“All of these are kind of messages, aren't they, to the wider world and decision makers and politicians and broadcasters and all of the people that you need to get pointing in the right direction,” one interviewee said.

There were also calls for the IF to have more of a say in the investment Member Boards make into women's cricket. *“It is up to the Board to take the right actions, but having no kind of formula for what women's cricket should get in terms of the percentage of money that they get from ICC, I don't know how good or bad it is. If ICC can say, this is not something that you can spend on the men, or something like that. There has to be some kind of a formula by which you know it is conveyed to the Board that this money is for both men and women and it should be spent on both. Maybe you don't give a number but you say it in so many words, that it's not just for men, we going to support women as well, and that this money is for all aspects of women's cricket too, whether it is the coaching or umpiring or women's health along with their contracts and everything. So that has to come from ICC, that would be really beneficial.”*

## Chapter 5- Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, it is clearly demonstrated that women's cricket can and has generated revenue for some teams, and that this revenue usually follows a period of investment.

Based on the information shared by the interviewees, the following recommendations are made:

### Efforts to remove cultural barriers.

As identified both through the literature review and interviews, cultural barriers are prevalent which influence investment by Member Boards into women's cricket, and these often reflect the cultural barriers for women in wider society.

While the IF or the Member Board cannot control the cultural barriers in society, there is an opportunity to take steps to overcome these by both bodies.

The IF may do so by organising regular workshops with key stakeholders, including NFs, in which they present case studies, success stories, and provide tools and frameworks to influence increased investment into women's cricket.

The IF may also consider commissioning research into the value of women's cricket and women's sport, which may be useful in influencing a variety of stakeholders, not just NFs.

The IF may adopt an 'equal but different' narrative, positioning women's cricket as its own product and avoiding comparisons with men's cricket, and at the same time stressing that an equitable approach is necessary when it comes to investing in women's cricket, commensurate to the investment into men's cricket.

The NF may do so by using local and global opportunities to their advantage, such as International Women's Day, alignment with local corporates who have gender equality as values, providing safer and better conditions for their women's teams (access to facilities, dressing rooms, etc) and positioning the women's team as an example of female empowerment, and leveraging global events organised by the IF to drive local women's cricket priorities.

### High Performance and Domestic Cricket investments.

Interviews unanimously identified investment in high performance and domestic cricket structures as a prerequisite to generating revenue, which are the responsibility of the NF.

Steps that NFs may consider are:

- a) National women's cricket team fully contracted, with fit-for-purpose support staff.



- b) National team calendar mapped out with fixtures aligned to World Cups, with investment into additional fixtures over and above the minimum fixtures mandated by FTP.
- c) Domestic women's cricketers fully contracted, providing a pipeline for the national team.
- d) Domestic tournaments structured to encourage a high number of 'best vs best' matches.
- e) National U19 programme, preparing a team for the U19 World Cup, with fit-for-purpose support staff and home and away fixtures.
- f) Domestic structures at the women's U19 and Women's U16/17 level that provide a pipeline of talent for the U19 programme.
- g) A-team programme to provide exposure and bench strength for the national team with home and away fixtures.
- h) Participation programmes targeted at girls, using tennis/soft balls, to ensure the base of the pyramid is wide and create more fans through participation.

In all these cases, to measure whether the existing high performance and domestic structures are fit-for-purpose, a rule of thumb to consider is whether the women's structures mirror those that have been in place for men for the last many decades, which have enabled the commercialisation of men's cricket.

## Visibility

The research identified sponsorship as the first revenue stream that is likely to be unlocked, and identified visibility as a key requirement, in order to provide exposure to assets such as front of jersey.

Visibility may be ensured in the following ways:

- a) Negotiation with rights holders to ensure that the competitions featuring the national team and domestic teams reach the maximum number of households.
- b) Scheduling in times and places that promote visibility e.g.: weekend, holidays, evening slots, post news slots, and on the platforms of rights holders that have the most reach-main channel, free-to-air, etc.
- c) Scheduling to maximise visibility and efficiency, this may be double headers with men's team/playing in the same stadium the day before or after the men's team or aligning visiting tours of men and women.
- d) Consistency of schedule so that fans expect matches on particular days every year (e.g.: festivals, International Women's Day, school holiday weekends, public holidays and aligned weekends, etc.)
- e) Production of such high visibility matches at a high standard, with a high percentage of matches on TV rather than streamed.
- f) Considering peak spending periods for brands as the periods in which matches are scheduled to maximise sponsorship opportunities e.g.: holidays.
- g) A deliberate social media strategy for the women's team that is fit-for-purpose in the market. This may be separate handles, or may be combined, but in either case, should

leverage large channels such as men's team channels to promote the women's team and events.

- h) A comms and social media team that is fit-for-purpose.
- i) Negotiation with rights holders for the NF to retain rights to post highlights of matches, on the NF's social media, and active promotion of these as per the NFs social media strategy.
- j) Consistently creating non-live, personality driven content showcasing the personalities of the players to promote hero building.
- k) Considering the IF has a large social media following and a highly successful Digital team, the IF may support the NF scaling the reach of their content.
- l) Where resources allow, explore the possibilities of producing a documentary centred on the women's team.

## Ticketing

Many interviewees expressed the push-pull relationship between ground attendance and broadcast scheduling, and so a deliberate approach to ticketing would also go hand in hand with an attempt to increase visibility. The following may be considered:

- a) If not already in place, a ticketing strategy that builds towards well attended women's games and paid tickets for women's games.
- b) Alignment of internal marketing budgets towards marketing campaigns for attendance, ensuring sponsors receive maximum visibility and the broadcast is able to portray a picture of a well-attended, high-interest game.
- c) Choice of venue that aligns with expected attendance and with the ticketing strategy, to ensure that many empty seats are not seen on broadcast.
- d) Ticket pricing tactics that put a value on the product, but also encourages attendances, e.g.: one-plus-one, children come free, etc.
- e) Providing a positive in-stadium experience to ticket-buyers.
- f) Making tickets available well in advance, and where advantageous, aligning ticket sales with that of the men's team.
- g) Analysis of ticket sales, to better identify and market to specific target audiences.

## Sponsorship

Once measures to ensure a high-quality product, that is highly visible, and well attended, have been put in place, conditions should be appropriate for securing sponsorship. This may be pursued in the following ways:

- a) Internal commercial strategy validating the higher growth potential of women's sponsorship.

- b) Market research identifying brands that are likely to demonstrate value alignment with the national women's team to explore cause-linked, long-term sponsorship, and are likely to care about different metrics as compared to sponsorship for a men's team.
- c) Market research identifying brands for whom the period of the season aligns with a period of interest.
- d) Market research identifying brands that are likely to activate a sponsorship, e.g. Through co-branded packaging, stadium attendances, media buying, hero-ing of players, etc.
- e) Where rights are sold as a bundle across both men's and women's teams, engagement with current and future sponsors seeking increased activation and spend towards the women's team.

## IF interventions

The IF may consider policy changes that allow it greater influence in how funding that is distributed to NFs is used, recognising that this will require constitutional changes.

As far in advance as possible, the IF may consider providing certainty to NFs around the time and place of its competitions, which will encourage and allow NFs to schedule international fixtures leading up to these, allowing the scheduling of more match content, which in turn, each NF can commercialise.

## Chapter 6- Action Plan

Based on the above recommendations, an action plan is proposed as below:

Table 2

Recommendation		Owner	Timeline
1	Workshops held to continue to influence the NFs to overcome cultural barriers.	IF	Immediate, ongoing.
2	Commissioning research that builds the business case for investment into women's cricket.	IF	Immediate, ongoing.
3	Increased investment into women's HP and domestic cricket, to mirror men's structures	NF	Immediate.
4	Implementation of recommendations designed to increase visibility.	NF	Immediate,
5	Supporting NFs in setting and achieving their visibility objectives through social media.	IF/NF	Immediate, ongoing.
6	Supporting NFs to secure sponsorship for their women's national teams	IF/NF	Once NF has put into place visibility measures.
7	Policy change to allow IF more influence in NF investment to be considered	IF	2028, as the financial model for the organisation is locked in until then.

Among the immediate recommendations that are within the purview of the IF, below is an update on how these are being actioned:

### Recommendation 1: Cultural Barriers

In February 2025, the IF hosted a high-performance workshop for middle-ranked NFs, to share best practices and reinforce the value of women's cricket. A similar workshop on a larger scale is planned for the Women's Cricket World Cup in October 2025.

The IF has also launched a new initiative, 'ICC Women's Cricket Week', identifying a week during an ICC Women's World Cup, in which Members can celebrate women's cricket in their own countries, allowing them to leverage a global event to shift local cultural barriers. The IF will provide visibility on broadcast to such Member initiatives during the World Cup to amplify their efforts, tying into Recommendation 4: Visibility.

### Recommendation 2: Research

The current media-rights cycle for the IF runs from 2024 to 2027, and the IF has undertaken a research project with the objective of providing a comprehensive overview of the growth, fan

base, and commercial opportunities within women's cricket. The intention is for this research to serve as a strategic resource for the IF to identify impactful opportunities and take stakeholders along on the journey.

#### Recommendation 5: Visibility through social media

The IF has also initiated a programme of increased cooperation with targeted NFs via social media, leading up to the next two women's global events, the Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 and the Women's T20 World Cup 2026. As a part of this initiative, the IF will offer support to the NFs by sharing highlights and select content of the NFs women's national team on the IFs channels, providing the NF the benefit of the IFs total following of more than 150 million across platforms.

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