



# Animated shorts to motivate women's participation and performance in soccer leagues in Lima.

Cortos animados para motivar la participación y el desempeño de mujeres en ligas de fútbol en Lima

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## Abstract

Despite its recent growth, Women's Soccer in Peru is affected by lack of support and promotion, which limits its professional development and perpetuates gender inequity in sports. This research analyzes how the lack of economic resources, inadequate infrastructure and sociocultural barriers negatively impact the performance of female soccer players in Metropolitan Lima. Through a mixed-method approach, combining in-depth interviews, surveys and participant observation, the study seeks to understand the difficulties faced by players and suggest innovative solutions. The results show the need for structural change that promotes gender equity in football. In this context, graphic design and video design emerge as powerful tools to showcase the talent of female soccer players, raise awareness about existing inequality and promote women's participation in the sport. Strategic use of digital platforms and social media will amplify the reach of these initiatives and promote cultural change that values and recognizes women's football on equal conditions.

## Resumen

El fútbol femenino en Perú, a pesar de su reciente crecimiento, se ve afectado por la falta de apoyo y promoción, lo que limita su desarrollo profesional y perpetúa la desigualdad de género en el deporte. Esta investigación analiza cómo la escasez de recursos económicos, la falta de infraestructura adecuada y las barreras socioculturales impactan negativamente en el desempeño de las futbolistas en Lima Metropolitana. A través de un enfoque metodológico mixto, que combina entrevistas a profundidad, encuestas y observación participante, se busca comprender las dificultades que enfrentan las jugadoras y proponer soluciones innovadoras. Los resultados evidencian la necesidad de un cambio estructural que promueva la equidad de género en el fútbol. En este contexto, el diseño gráfico y el diseño de videos emergen como herramientas poderosas para visibilizar el talento de las futbolistas, generar conciencia sobre las desigualdades existentes y promover la participación de las mujeres en este deporte. El uso estratégico de plataformas digitales y redes sociales permitirá amplificar el alcance de estas iniciativas y promover un cambio cultural que valore y reconozca el fútbol femenino en igualdad de condiciones.

**Keywords:** Communication, women, sports, short-films, equity

**Palabras clave:** Comunicación, mujeres, deporte, cortometrajes, igualdad

## Introduction

**S**port is a valuable instrument of social development and plays an essential role as an integral enhancer, culturally, politically, and economically, in various contexts. It can be highlighted how, in ancient Greece, Paideia valued physical education and games for human formation (Jaeger, 1957). Over time, this idea is projected in the Eutrapelia of Saint Thomas Aquinas, giving value to the game and sports as essential parts of well-being. Already in the 20th century, Johan Huizinga (1938), with his *Homo Ludens*, and Roger Caillois (1958), developed ludology, the first considering games as universal activities for the creation of culture, and the second focusing on their rules and structure.

Among sports games, soccer enjoys massive popularity. Its roots date back to games in China, such as *tsun chu*, and in Greece, such as *episkyros*, but it was in England where it took its contemporary form in the 19th century. The Football Association was created in 1863, when it developed its first official rules, which currently state that the game must be played on a rectangular field with two teams of 11 players, whose objective is to score goals by introducing the ball into the opponent's goal, mainly with their feet, although using the head and chest is allowed. Women's soccer, on the other hand, also has antecedents dating back to the 19th century; however, its popularity increased with the creation of the FIFA Women's World Cup in 1991 (Morrow, 2018). In recent decades, academic research has paid special attention to the intersection of sport and gender, revealing persistent inequalities and challenges faced by women in accessing and participating in sports. Various studies have analyzed the sociocultural, economic, and institutional barriers that limit women's development in sports, as well as strategies to promote gender equity in this field.

In the Latin American context, women's participation in soccer has experienced significant growth in recent years. However, despite the progress, challenges persist that hinder the professional development of female soccer players. Social and journalistic research on the wage gap in professional soccer and specific studies like Conde's (2008) on women's experiences in soccer, highlight the inequalities and challenges faced by female soccer players in the region.

These findings are consistent with previous work, such as Cansino and Gálvez (2014), on the determinants of participation in physical activities, which highlights the influence of sociocultural factors that perpetuate gender inequality. The study by Dosal et al. (2017) on the relationship between sports and gender equity reinforces the importance of promoting equal opportunities for women in sports. The authors emphasize the need for structural change that fosters equity, investment, and recognition of female soccer.

In Peru, a study conducted by the Equality in Sports Foundation (2021) notes that Peruvian female soccer players face a series of obstacles that limit their professional development, including lack of economic support, shortage of adequate infrastructure and gender discrimination. Another important point is that the value of sports practice is conditioned by factors such as the type of sport, background, lifestyle, or socioeconomic status of the individual and, above all, their gender.

It is possible to say that men's soccer is the most popular in the country; however, following the support and media promotion that the Women's Soccer League has received in recent years, laws are changing and regulations are being promoted to favor sponsorship and professionalism, as well as female sports promotion; although, unfortunately, this process is considered very slow and with many gaps (Casas, 2022). The need for a real and joint effort to encourage media coverage of women's soccer and encourage the participation of girls and women in sports is fundamental to breaking down performance barriers and inequality (Regalado, 2023).

The main problem addressed by this research is the poor sports performance of women's soccer team clubs in Metropolitan Lima, due to lack of support and above all, their limited promotion and broadcast through the media. This problem translates into a series of difficulties for female soccer players, such as: the lack of support and recognition complicates the development of a professional career in women's soccer, leading many players to abandon the sport or dedicate themselves to other activities; the lack of resources, infrastructure, and technical support limits the level of competitiveness of women's soccer clubs, reflecting in sports results at the local and international levels; the lack of media coverage of women's soccer perpetuates the invisibility of female soccer players and their achievements, making it difficult to attract new players and generate interest from the public and sponsor brands.

### Subject of study

The main objective of this research is to analyze the influence of the lack of support and promotion on the poor sports performance of women's soccer clubs in Metropolitan Lima. The goal is to highlight the difficulties faced by female soccer players and propose solutions through visual communication that contribute to gender equity in sports. In this case, design, audiovisual production, and publicity campaigns play a crucial

role in this research. Through the creation of short videos with animated illustrations, the goal is to tell the stories of female soccer players, their challenges and their achievements, using a modern and attractive aesthetic that connects with the audience.

The project produced and carried out aims to represent the drive of these athletes in their pursuit of gender equality in soccer, where the priority is to generate a change in the concept of soccer as an activity for all. It's essential to communicate that a gender gap still exists within Peruvian soccer. By highlighting this, it will not only be possible to increase visibility of the problem, but also consequently, the project aims to generate acceptance in Peruvian society towards women's participation in soccer, where a female soccer player is seen without prejudice or stereotypes.

The project is based on the use of graphic design, graphic arts, and audiovisual multimedia production to convey a message of gender equality in soccer; using colors, images, and animations that transmits energy, strength, and motivation. The project also develops a colloquial communication tone that makes the message easy to understand and remember. The produced and broadcasted videos, which include inspiring testimonials from players, will serve as a tool to showcase the talent of female soccer players, generate empathy and emotional connection, inspire new generations, and promote cultural change. It is expected that this research, through the strategic use of design and audiovisual production, will generate a positive impact on the development of women's soccer in Peru.

## Theoretical foundation *Sports as an instrument of social development*

Sports as a social and cultural phenomenon, transcends the merely physical realm to influence various aspects of individual and collective life. In addition to those mentioned at the beginning of this document, several authors recognize sports as a valuable instrument of social development, with an essential role as an integral enhancer in the cultural, political, and economic dimensions (Dosal et al, 2017; Santos and Balibrea, 2004). Sports promotes values such as discipline, teamwork, perseverance, and respect contributing to the formation of upright citizens and the construction of a more cohesive society. Likewise, it can be a booster of economic development, generating employment, attracting investment, and promoting tourism.

### *Opportunities and challenges for women in sports*

Despite advances in gender equality, women still face barriers that limit their access and participation in sports. Various studies have highlighted the inequalities that persist in the sports sphere, both at the professional and amateur levels (Cansino and Gálvez, 2014; Fundación Deporte

en Igualdad, 2021). Women face a lack of economic support, inadequate infrastructure, gender discrimination, gender stereotypes, and socio-cultural barriers that affect their athletic development.

However, women's participation in sports also represents an opportunity to challenge traditional norms and promote gender equity. Sports can be a tool for female empowerment, allowing women to develop their potential, strengthen their self-esteem, and build new identities.

### ***Women's soccer in Peru: a growing reality***

In Peru, female soccer has experienced notable growth in recent years, driven by global interest and initiatives from the Women's Soccer League. However, despite progress, challenges persist that need to be addressed to achieve professional and equitable development of women's soccer.

Research by the Fundación Deporte en Igualdad (2021) and Cansino and Gálvez (2014) reveals that Peruvian female soccer players face a series of difficulties, including lack of economic support, shortage of resources, and gender discrimination. These obstacles result in poor sports performance, limited professional opportunities, and limited visibility for female soccer players.

### ***Design as a tool for visibility and cultural change***

Graphic design can be a powerful tool to increase visibility of female soccer, promote gender equality, and generate a shift in the social perception of this sport. Through creative and inspiring graphic pieces, it could reach a wider audience, generating a higher interest in the sport.

The use of illustration, animation, and social media can be key to connecting with new generations, especially *millennials y centennials*, and conveying a message of empowerment and overcoming challenges (Atay and Ashlock, 2024).

## **Epistemological Approach**

The epistemological approach of this article is based on intervention of the problem at hand through graphic design. It's based on the premise that graphic design can be an agent of social change, strong enough to shift the current state and promote gender equality in the sports scene. This approach finds its foundations in the idea that although design is thought of as a tool for aesthetics, it can also create a way to communicate, persuade and generate social conscience. Through design visual narratives can be created which could inspire, motivate and promote women soccer activity,

## Methodology design

The investigation at hand has developed a mixed approach, quantitative and qualitative, with its main focus on the latter. The first step was an exhaustive research of the current literature about women soccer, the gender gap in sports and graphic design as a social intervention tool.

Afterwards, through the qualitative approach, detailed information of the experiences, perspectives and thoughts of female soccer players, coaches and other actors involved in women's soccer was found, through participant observation, visual and written ethnography and exhaustive semi-structured interview guides were designed for each of the participants.

Meanwhile the quantitative focus, through surveys under a non-probability and a convenience sample focus, allowed the gathering of numeric data to compile analysis and obtain a wider view of the problem. Thus, surveys with open and closed questions were designed. .

The people involved in the research were selected deliberately. On that note, surveys and interviews were held for 18 to 28 year old women who had actively participated in football clubs of Metropolitan Lima; meanwhile, interviews and surveys for women's soccer coaches with local club experience, administrative personnel of local women soccer clubs and sport journalists that had covered women soccer were also held. In addition participative observations in training sessions and sports events were held with the objective to register behavior and interactions between soccer players and actors involved.

The quantitative data obtained was analyzed through descriptive statistics. Frequencies, percentages and measures of central tendencies were measured to describe characteristics of the sample and answers of the closed questions.

Qualitative data obtained by the interviews and participant observation were analyzed with the content analysis technique. With the objective to comprehend the problem of poor athletic performance in women soccer from a comprehensive perspective, recurring topics and patterns were identified in the participants' answers. The combined results of surveys, interviews and participant observation provided a more complete view of the problem at hand.

Unfortunately, due to limitations to centralized data, there was a steep difficulty to determine the population of female soccer players and coaches in Metropolitan Lima, however a rough estimate in between 100 to 200 professional soccer players was reached taking into account the number of players who are active in the Female soccer League.

Furthermore, a universe of 26 to 34 professional coaches is estimated, taking into account the soccer teams (Women's League FPF, s.f.). The surveys were conducted with a sample of 46 soccer players, between 18 and 28 years old, through an online questionnaire with 16 questions,

and with 12 soccer coaches, through another virtual questionnaire with 12 questions.

Among the most notable results, it shows only a small percentage of female soccer players can focus solely on their sport, while most must juggle training with other responsibilities, affecting their ability to train regularly and achieve high performance. (See figure 1)

### What is your current situation? (Multiple choice)

46 answers

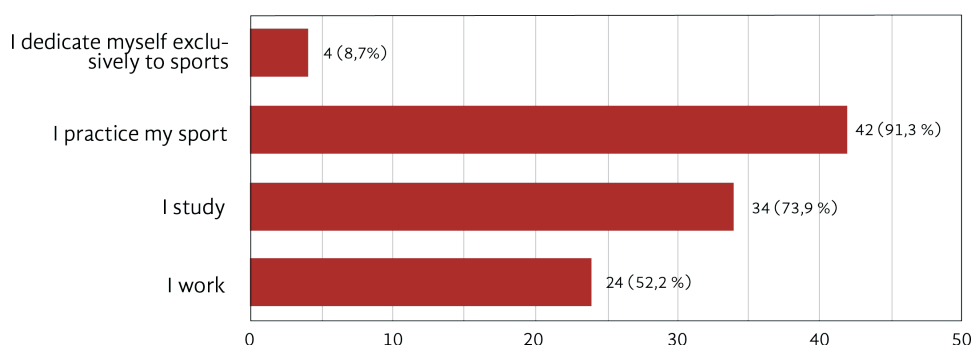


Figure 1. Female Football Players' Dedication to Their Daily Activities.  
Source: Own elaboration.

On the other hand, all participants reported experiencing some form of discrimination or aggression in their sports environment, highlighting the importance of addressing this issue (See figure 2).

### Within the sports environment, have you experienced any of the following situations? (Multiple choice)

46 answers

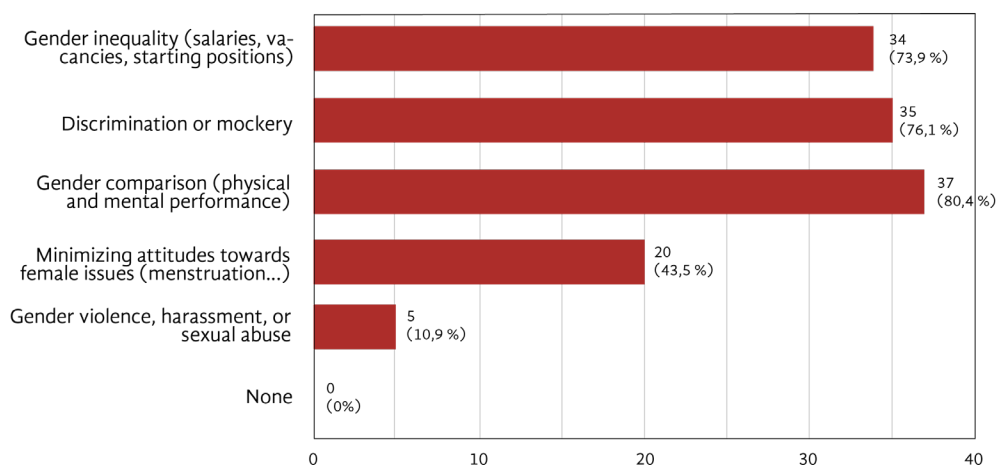


Figure 2. Negative Situations Experienced by the Surveyed Female Football Players.  
Source: Own elaboration.



Regarding the surveys of coaches, it is particularly noteworthy that the majority have stated that the major problems within women's soccer are financial support, infrastructure, contracts, and sponsorships, showing the shortcomings that hinder the professionalization of this sport (see figure 3). Additionally, nearly 70% of them believe that support and media coverage influence the development of the sport, reaffirming the issues, biases, difficulties, and prejudices involved, which are fundamental to the lack of motivation for participation and performance of female soccer players (See figure 4)

**What factors do you consider to be absent or unequal in women's football compared to men's football? (Multiple choice)**

12 answers

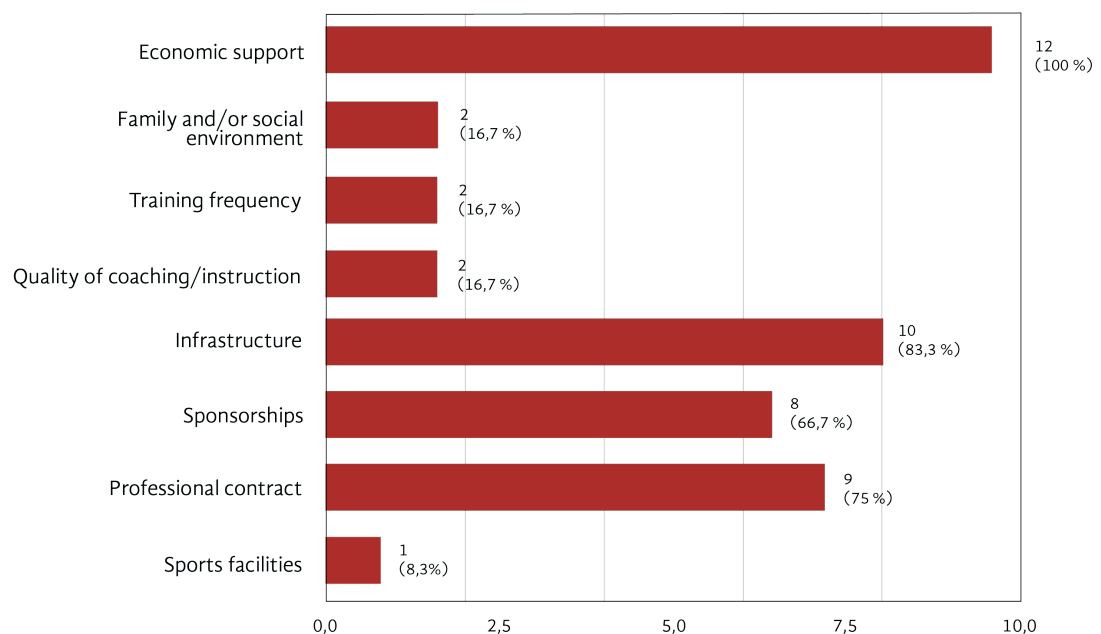


Figure 3. Absent Factors in Women's Football Considered by the Surveyed Coaches.  
Source: Own elaboration.



### Do you believe that media support and coverage influence the development and competitiveness of a sport?

12 answers

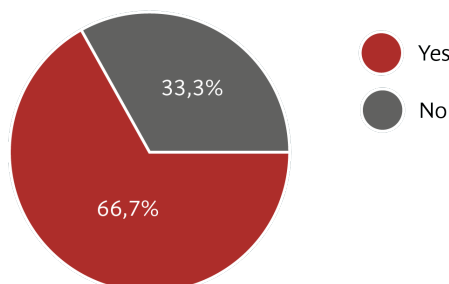


Figure 4. *Importance of Media Coverage and Its Influence on Women's Football as Considered by the Surveyed Coaches.*

Source: Own elaboration.

The interviews with players, coaches, managers, and sports journalists confirmed the existence of sociocultural barriers, such as gender discrimination, lack of financial support, and limited visibility in the media. The lack of financial support translates into low salaries, lack of professional contracts and limited opportunities for scholarships or sponsorships. "When we talk about budget, we're talking about revenue from ticket sales, television rights, sponsors, and merchandising," says Gallegos (2021, p. 3). Without a budget, women's soccer is relegated to the background. Sociocultural barriers, such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, and lack of recognition, affect the motivation and self-esteem of female players. "The people and even ourselves, get used to the jokes," says Marisella Joya, a soccer player from César Vallejo University, in an interview.

"Men's soccer sells more" says Piero Cavagna, sports journalist and founder of Pase Filtrado, a digital media outlet created in 2017, with content and broadcast of information about Peruvian and international soccer (Pase Filtrado, 2021). Although it is a reality, this phrase conceals the lack of investment and promotion that women's soccer suffers.

Besides, participant observations at clubs like Petroperú, Campo mar and Atenas USIL coliseum revealed significant differences in infrastructure and resources allocated to men's and women's teams.

#### Project development

According to the research conducted and the problems shown, it was determined that there was a need to develop a project that would help promote and disseminate female soccer in Peru, from the perspective and influence of design and visual communication, creating an audiovisual

campaign to promote it, with the goal of motivating more girls, teenagers, and young women to pursue it professionally.

The campaign was titled '*Nivela la cancha*' and was based on the creation of short videos with animated illustrations that tell the stories of Peruvian female soccer players, published on the official Instagram page of the Women's Soccer League, F7, which served as the main partner for the project. Each video features the story of a Peruvian female soccer player, using *storytelling* techniques, highlighting their experiences, challenges, and achievements.

The storytelling focuses on the relevance of narrative storytelling to capture attention, engage, and influence the audience through a clear structure, memorable characters, and an inspiring main message (Goaz, 2020). Since the main objective of the project was to increase visibility of women's soccer, raise awareness about the gender gap in sports, and motivate more women to participate in this discipline, the narratives in the videos and publications for the campaign allow humanizing and bringing the problem closer, sharing a more relatable and persuasive discourse, achieving an impact and motivating the expected attitude change.

In recent years, projects similar to *Nivela la cancha* have been developed, designing campaigns to promote women in sports, such as "*Así somos, así nos hizo el deporte*" (This is how we are, this is how sports made us) from the Proyecto Deportivo Legado del Gobierno del Perú (*El Peruano*, 2023), "*We are born Ready*" from Nike Woman (Nike, 2022), and "*This Girl Can*" funded by the National Lottery of the United Kingdom (This Girl Can, s.f.), which focuses on sharing inspiring stories of female athletes, highlighting their challenges, achievements, and overcoming obstacles through social media. *Nivela la cancha* stands out for its specific focus on women's soccer and the use of animated illustration as its main visual resource, emphasizing the stories of Peruvian female soccer players, the gender barriers, and dissemination challenges they face in this sport.

The brand proposal for the project originates from the concept of "women seeking to level the playing field", which represents their drive to achieve equality in the Peruvian sports system. The logo and naming of *Nivela la cancha* (see figure 5), with its literal and subjective meanings, aims to express the action intended to be fulfilled: having the opportunity to level the rules of the game.



Figure 5. *Project Logo.*  
Source: *Own elaboration.*

With the goal of fitting into the sports concept, a vibrant color palette of blues, fuchsias, and oranges was chosen to express the attitude of the athletes. A slogan was added to the main name: "*Let's play together*" (*Juguemos juntas*), specifically representing the motive, objective, and message that was intended to be conveyed, which later served as a hashtag, a digital label for easy virtual search. Additionally, with this social media technique, the campaign aimed to spread and create a trend, motivating teenage girls and young women to join the cause.

The videos were developed in a modern *grunge* and pop style. That is, through the tonalities of solid illustrations, combined with some linear elements, certain textures and gradients, to express agility and movement. Grunge is marked by its sandy textures, shaded photos, and collage compositions with peculiar brush strokes. In other words, the grunge style has a physical implication, and with this resource, we sought to propose an aesthetic that reflects the "*friction*" of soccer and the feeling of the field (see figures 6, 7, and 8). The mixed media technique, with intervening photos and videos, generates a differential and easy to remember visual style.

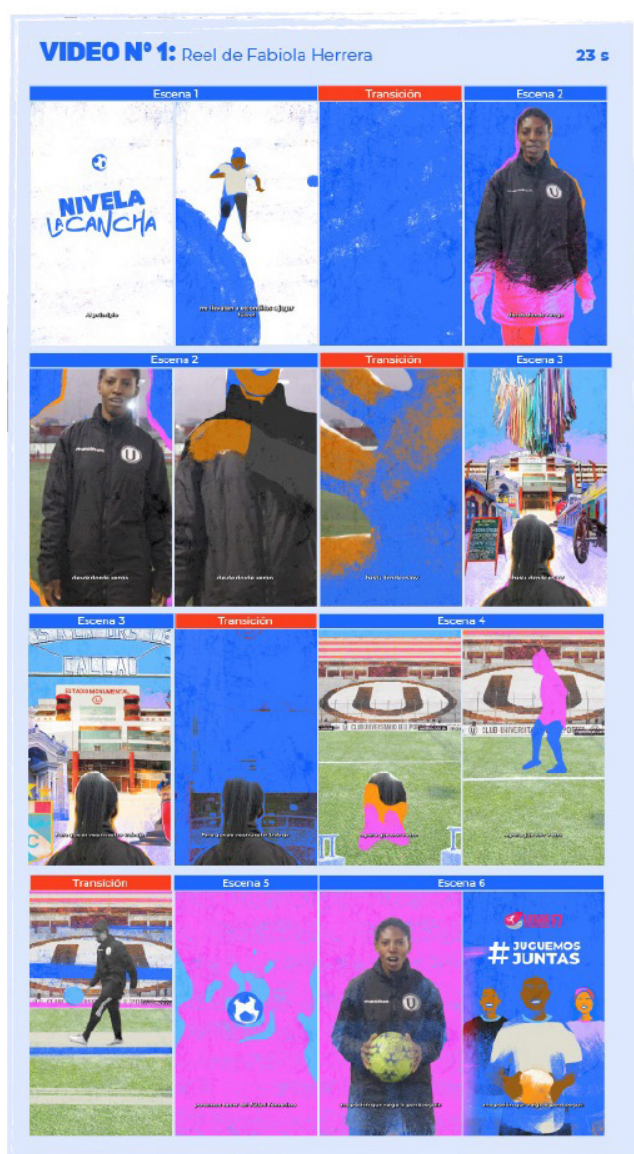


Figure 6. Graphic script of illustrated video N° 1, where it shows the style. Access to video N° 1 through QR code.  
Source: Own elaboration.

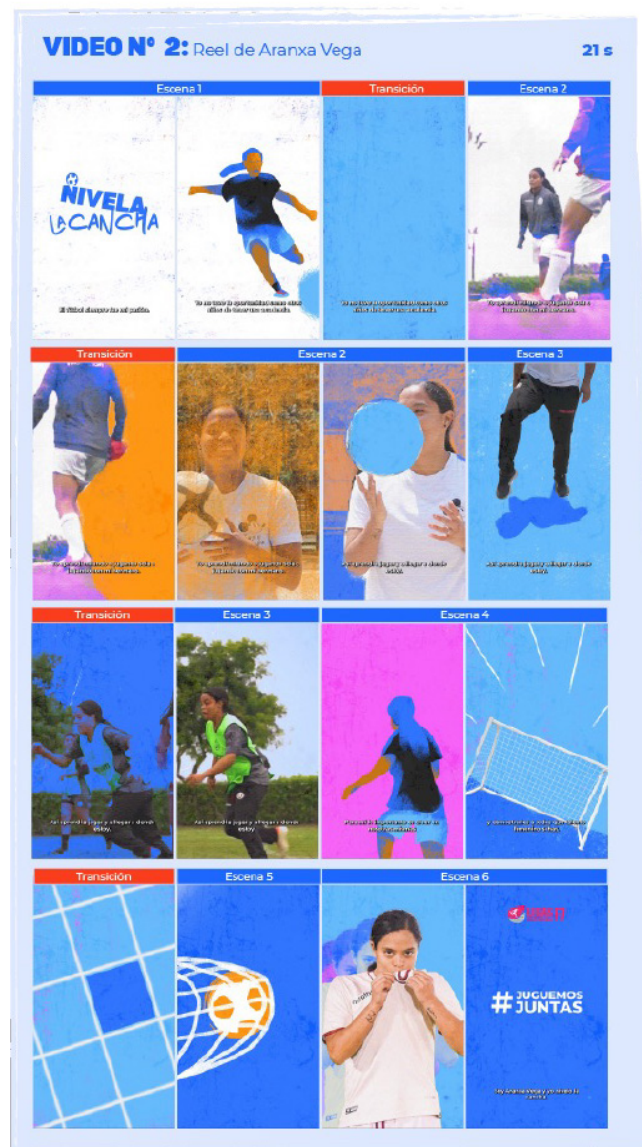


Figure 7. Graphic script of illustrated video N° 2, where it shows the style. Access to video N° 2 through QR code.  
Source: Own elaboration.



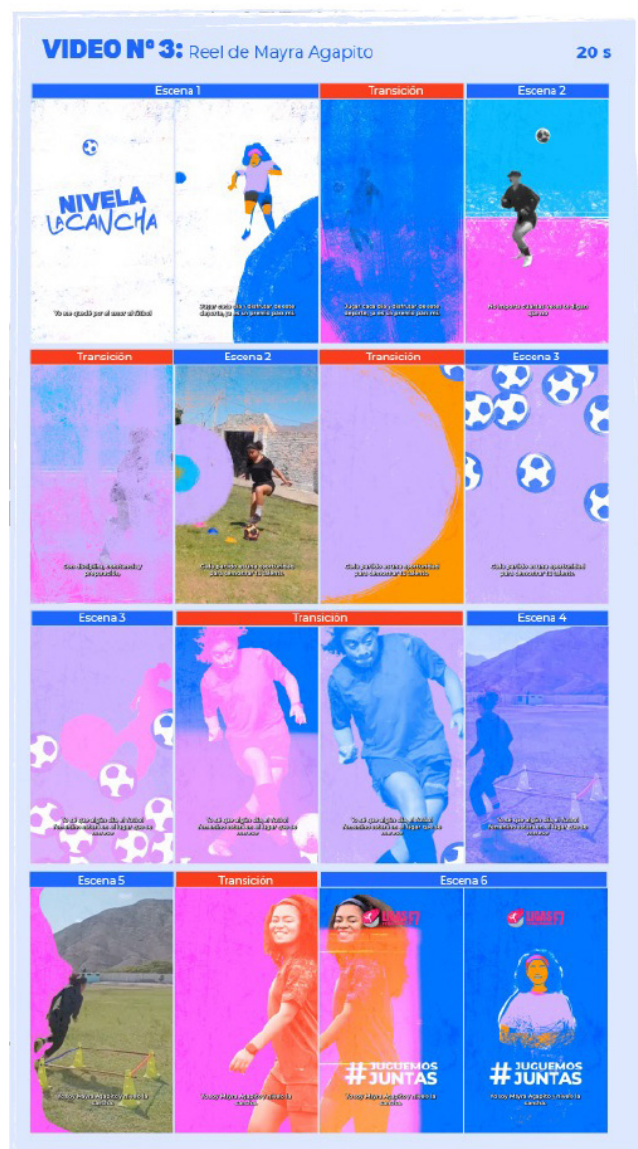


Figure 8. Graphic script of illustrated video N° 3, where it shows the style. Access to video N° 3 through QR code.  
Source: Own elaboration.

On the Instagram page of the Women's Soccer League 7, main partner of the project, the audiovisual pieces were broadcasted through a format of short videos known as reels, based on a scheduled broadcasting plan. Each piece focused on the personality of the female soccer player, her experience, or some personal motivation to inspire the participation of more women in Peruvian soccer.

The short videos with animated illustrations were produced by combining different techniques, using illustrations with digital tools, as well

as editing photographs and intervening videos. The result was a more personalized product, where the style and course of the video depends on the experience of each athlete (see figure 9)



Figure 9. Campaign's development on Instagram with interactive stories.  
Source: Own elaboration.

## Results

In the research stage, as previously noted, it was shown that very few female soccer players can afford the time to practice their discipline adequately. In this sense, only 46% of them manage to maintain a training frequency of 2 to 3 hours, a time frame suggested for high-performance sports. Similarly, regarding their decision to pursue a job or a professional career, 90% conclude that sports do not provide a stable economic income. They also affirm that the lack of support for women's soccer significantly affects motivation (82%), performance (82%), and competitiveness (85%);



and even 65% of the respondents have considered abandoning soccer practice at some point. On the other hand, the majority of coaches surveyed, on a scale of 1 to 5, consider, with an average score of "4", that sociocultural barriers and beliefs affect female participation in soccer to a considerable extent.

Subsequently, after the implementation of the project, in partnership with the Women's League F7, its validation on Instagram was analyzed, where the campaign was broadcasted, resulting in favorable metrics (see table 1 and figure 10).

*Table 1.* Analysis of metrics for the graphic content published on the Women's Leagues F7 Instagram page during the 6-week launch campaign.

Content Type	Metric	Final Result	Percentage Gained (Approx.)
Reel N° 1 "Fabiola Herrera"	Organic reach	6653	+121%
	Number of views	8068	+170%
	Number of comments	32	+96%
	Number of likes	250	+400%
	Number of shares	50	-
Story "Sneak Peek 1"	Number of views	391	+11%
Story "Sneak Peek 2"	Number of views	448	+39%
	Number of interactions ( <i>sticker</i> )	52	-
Reel N° 2 "Aranxa Vega"	Number of views	4285	+42%
	Number of comments	12	+4%
	Number of likes	58	+150%
	Number of shares	38	-
Story "Sneak Peek 1"	Number of views	315	-11%
	Number of interactions ( <i>poll</i> )	28	-
Story "Sneak Peek 2"	Number of views	298	+17%
	Number of interactions ( <i>sticker</i> )	30	-

Note: Only two of the main pieces were evaluated due to publication time.  
Source: Own elaboration.

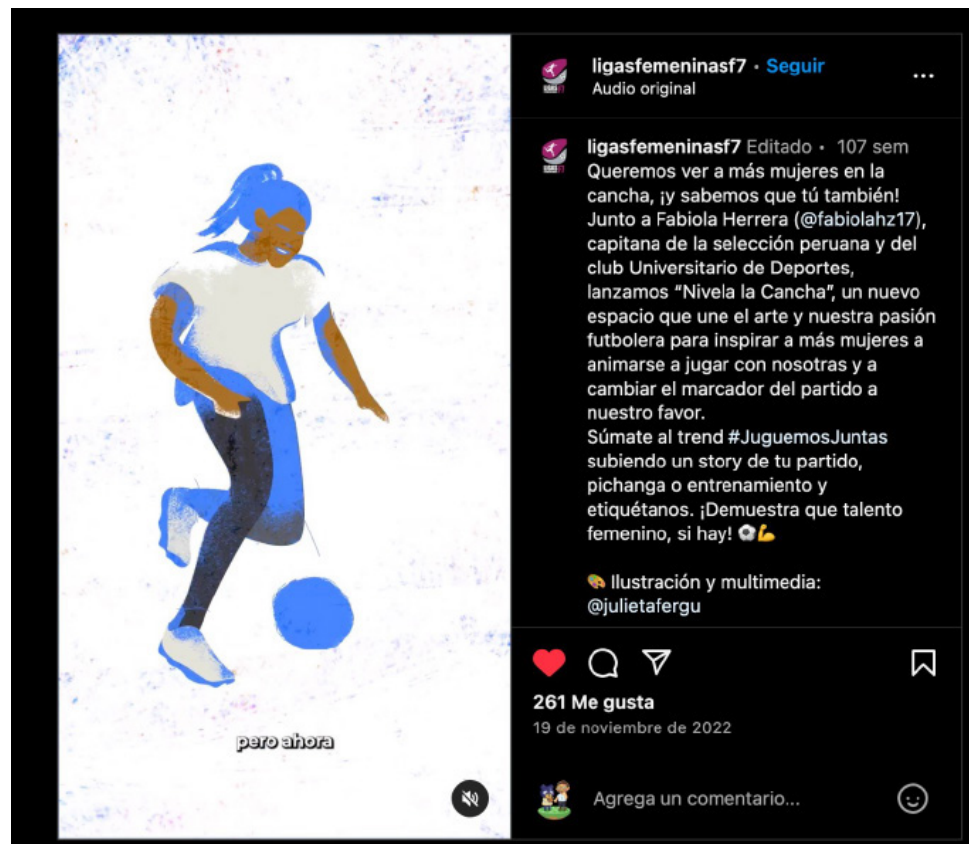


Figure 10. Screenshot of Video 1's Post on the Ligas Femeninas F7 Instagram Account. Source: Own elaboration.


A significant increase was noted in the reach and public interaction with the Women's League F7 posts on Instagram. The organic reach of the posts increased by an average of 121% compared to the previously recorded average reach. This increase was evident in a higher number of views, comments, likes, and shares on the project's posts. In particular, the first reel, featuring soccer player Fabiola Herrera, had a 400% increase in the number of likes. Additionally, there was a greater public interest in women's soccer academies, which translated into an increase in inquiries and requests for information through the project's website.

The project was evaluated by experts in journalism, sports management, audiovisual communication, animation, and multimedia. The experts praised it for its quality, presentation, and management. They highlighted the choice of concept and colors, the presentation of storytelling with playful elements, the combination of voice, real image, and graphic design, and the good handling of animations, colors and proportions. Overall, the experts considered the project to be viable and that it has the potential to promote women's soccer in the community.

## Conclusions

Peruvian female soccer is developing with greater momentum, but certain gender barriers still persist, blocking the proper performance, development, and competitiveness of female soccer players. These barriers are reflected in the lack of attention from spectators, sponsors, and the media. The "*Nivela la cancha*" project aims to show the message that women deserve to develop in soccer just like men, proposing an inspiring and referential concept that puts the female soccer player at the center of the main action.

*Nivela la cancha* had a positive impact on the visibility and promotion of women's soccer in Peru, managing to increase the organic reach of the Women's League F7 on Instagram, as well as the number of followers and interest in the academies. However, the project has some limitations. Firstly, it focused solely on women's soccer in Metropolitan Lima. It is essential to extend the project to other regions of Peru so that more women can benefit from it. Secondly, the project focused only on high-level women's soccer. It is also necessary to include amateur women's soccer to promote the sport among girls and teenagers.

The project was positively evaluated by experts and the management of the Women's League F7. *Nivela la cancha* has proven to be an effective tool for increasing visibility and promoting women's soccer in Peru. It is recommended to extend the project by featuring more female role models to showcase different experiences with greater diversity of players and clubs. The project is an example of how graphic design, graphic arts, and audiovisual multimedia production can be used to promote gender equality and other important social issues. It has had a positive impact on the visibility and promotion of female soccer in Peru and can contribute to gender equality in sports. 

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She is a professional with a degree in Business Art and Design, with specializations in Brand Management and Illustration, from Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola. For the past two years, she worked in the Strategic Communication Unit of the Faculty of Communications, Tourism, and Psychology at Universidad de San Martín de Porres, creating graphic pieces, audiovisual editing, and web content for internal communication and social media, successfully meeting the strategic objectives of each academic campaign or event. Currently, she serves as a senior graphic designer in the Admissions and Commercial Management office of the Rectorate at Universidad de San Martín de Porres, where her responsibilities include directing admissions projects, developing creative concepts, and establishing graphic guidelines, with the goal of strengthening communication for each academic program for internal and external advertising campaigns.

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He holds a Master of Business Sciences with a specialization in Project Management from Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola (USIL) and a bachelor's degree in Brand Design and Management from the same university. He is a design professional passionate about education. His training is complemented by studies in advertising design, digital design, and graphic and web design, completed at institutions such as ISTP Araoz Pinto, IPAD, and Toulouse Lautrec. Currently, he works as a full-time professor in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at USIL, where he has excelled in his work and has been recognized as an outstanding professor in 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2024. His teaching experience also includes participation in the International Baccalaureate program at CEGECOOP Peruano Japonés "La Unión" and at other educational institutions, such as Instituto Charles Chaplin and Universidad Científica del Sur.

In addition to teaching, Juan Pablo is an entrepreneur who founded Cultura Ludens, a gamified training company, and Comarca, a consultancy firm. He has also worked as a lead designer at the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations and the Ministry of Economy and Finance (OSCE). Among his academic achievements, he notably received a Full Scholarship for Academic Excellence for ranking first across all majors in the 2015-2 and 2016-0 graduating classes at USIL for his Master's in Business Sciences.



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