Women’s Sports Are Booming and Adtech Must Keep Pace

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Live sports have always been an important way for marketers to reach audiences and with the rise of women’s sports, there are more opportunities than ever. But that also means adtech must scale with audiences to deliver seamless integration.

During an ADWEEK Track session at Marketecture Live, Will Lee, CEO of ADWEEK, sat down with Allison Martucci Freyman, head of media, entertainment, and sports partnerships at Google, and Bethany Hillman, SVP of data and advertising operations at TelevisaUnivision, to discuss how their businesses are leveraging the growing power of women’s sports.

Preparing for the unpredictable

Martucci Freyman and Hillman set the stage by talking about big moments in women’s sports. At the forefront was the U.S. women’s hockey team winning gold in overtime at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan. They also brought up WNBA player Caitlin Clark and her “Clark-onomics,” a shorthand for her halo effect on the economy.

“[Clark’s] impact on attendance and ticket sales and merch, and the ability of WNBA players to have a jet that’s commissioned for them to fly they’re not flying commercial—that’s incredible,” said Martucci Freyman.

Beyond the athletes, live sports are exciting because of the unpredictability. Martucci Freyman mentioned overtime as something totally unique to sports. Before a game starts, inventory is known and limited. But if it goes beyond

regulation—as it did with the U.S. women's hockey team playing Canada—it suddenly means more audiences and more inventory.

The question becomes how adtech can scale in response to that demand.

"When we think about the solutions we're building with Google Ad Manager and our server-side DAI (dynamic ad insertion) solution, that's really about scalability, having that infrastructure that's global worldwide where we can support events that do scale up to that level," Martucci Freyman said.

Pulling in new brands

According to Hillman, the rise of women's sports has coincided with more opportunities for female-centric brands. "Pulling those brands into the idea that live sports are covering their target market is huge," she said. "And also giving them insights into areas that maybe they haven't advertised before."

Martucci Freyman mentioned the class of mid-market brands and SMBs (small and mid-sized businesses) that have yet to really embrace CTV or haven't done it in a "nuanced way." Her team at Google works with partners like Hillman's TelevisaUnivision to identify that demand and educate them on the new opportunities from women's sports.

"That is an area where Google is leaning in," Martucci Freyman said. "And really bringing those advertisers along, educating them as we go, thinking about it as 1+1 can equal 3, where you're extending your reach. These are not people that you're reaching otherwise."

Using AI to evolve adtech

As adtech adapts to the growth in women's sports, Hillman and Martucci Freyman are excited about the future.

Hillman, who works in operations, brought up AdCP and its ability to let AI agents interact transparently about transactions in a biddable environment.

“I think there’s a real opportunity with AdCP coming out about really how to transact in a much smarter way and systems being much more open to share data that a human on a telephone isn’t prepared to share,” Hillman said.

Martucci Freyman remarked that a lot of adtech, while powerful, is still “old school.”

“It’s still just a spreadsheet talking to a system on the back end,” she said. “And so leveraging the tools, the AI, the suite, to really automate and enhance and moving people on to work on more strategic things. A rising tide lifts all boats.”

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