

**Our
common
language
in a world
lost for
words**

SPORT

Ogilvy



It's a leveller. A conversation starter. A force for good. Billions of fans and millions of communities to be a part of worldwide. This report looks at the power of sport as the common language in a fractured world, and what it means for fans, brands, and sport itself?

THE TAKEAWAY:

In a world drowning in distractions, algorithms, and ad blockers, only sport commands the attention of billions in a single, unifying moment. Its power extends well beyond the stadium lights. It's not just entertainment, it's a universal opportunity that connects. Connecting communities to countries, fashion to fans, music to technology, and Inspires social change.

ONE FAN LANGUAGE; MANY UNIQUE SPORTING DIALECTS

Fans aren't just passive consumers; they're active participants, fuelled by passion, rituals, creative expression, and unwritten codes. To truly resonate with fans, we must speak their language and tap into the rich tapestry of cultural insights, fan dedication and daily debates. Forget surface-level plays; it's time to go deep on relevance.



Everyone loves an underdog. Especially gamers

Burger King, DAVID Madrid

We understand that fans love an underdog story; and in the gaming world defying the odds is part of the game.

So with Burger King, we found a way to enter FIFA 20 and get gamers and the world's players behind them without paying millions. How? Burger King became the real-life sponsor of the team at the bottom of English football's 4th division: Stevenage. Understanding that if its logo was on their shirt, it was going to appear in FIFA 20. The brand then launched the #StevenageChallenge, inviting gamers to play with Stevenage and share UGC of the likes of Messi and Neymar wearing the Burger King logo, for Burger King rewards in return. It turned a small-team underdog in real life into the biggest team online! Now that's what we call a result.



Speaking fluent 'fan'. Humour wins with Guinness L'O. Opportunité

Guinness, Ogilvy Ireland

In an act no one could have expected, we helped Guinness tap into one of the most contagious and humorous rugby moments of 2023, to tackle national fan deflation after the "quarter-final curse" struck again at the Rugby World Cup. Enter: Ronan O'Gara - Irish Rugby legend turned French Coach, with a rousing national pep talk in.. French? English? ...Frenchish.

"Irish humour is the mother of all inside jokes. By playing into Ronan's infamous team talk, our audience felt like they were already in on the joke. And the beauty of the best inside joke is that we didn't try to over-explain it; why he was speaking half French, half English? We just let it play out."



Beyond cheering, Czech campaign taps into the hearts of the nation

Olympic Committee, Ogilvy Czech Republic

The Czech Republic Olympic Committee understands: fans aren't just watching, they're *living* the Olympic dream right alongside their athletes. Our "One for all, all for Paris" campaign, with The Czech Republic Olympic committee isn't just about cheering; it's about tapping into the Czech Republic's deep-rooted Olympic soul. By showcasing inspiring athlete stories and timeless Olympic values, the campaign has transformed passive support into a powerful, unified force. This is national pride in action.

THE TAKEAWAY:

For many brands who don't have the big budgets for A-list talent or sports stars, playing into sporting codes and deep fan insight is a way to cut through with creative impact and relevancy.

A NEW ERA IN BROADCASTING: CONVERGENCE, CONTROL AND CREATORS

Gone are the days of live sport and one exclusive channel.

We are witnessing a move towards multiplatform, multichannel and full story world ecosystem. From streaming to second screening, to entertainment, the line between URL and IRL is blurring.

Even Netflix, once content with just sports documentaries, is jumping into the live game. Their “Netflix Cup” throws together stars from their F1 and golf shows, creating a must-watch event during the Vegas Grand Prix. This is hybrid sports entertainment at its best, blending big personalities with live action.

And what’s driving this? Fans craving control and connection. They want personalised, interactive experiences – think social features, gamification, and algorithms feeding them exactly what they crave.

Forget the narrative of declining viewership. A new breed of sports fan has emerged, one that’s rewriting the rules of engagement. While Gen Z might not be glued to live broadcasts (only 31% of 18–24-year-olds vs. >>

75% of those over 55), their passion for sport is undeniable. 72% of Gen Z still watch football weekly, surpassing even millennials (59%).

What *has* changed though, is their interest in the way they engage with sport, watching less live sport, just 31% of global sports fans aged 18-24 watched live matches, compared with 75% for those 55 and over.

The difference? This generation of fans consume sport on their own terms, and across multiple platforms. Their interest is not confined just to the sport itself but with authentic and real people who are involved in it. Far from the demise of sport, this new era of fandom offers the potential to engage way beyond the game itself across a plethora of digital channels.

Formula 1's resurgence exemplifies this shift. Drive to Survive is credited with converting 71 million Americans into F1 fans. The reality is that cross-over from "Drive to Survive" to the races themselves shows Netflix added roughly 360,000 new viewers to the Miami Grand Prix in 2021.

But race figures are a poor measure of the Netflix effect. The show's true impact isn't convincing 360,000 Americans to watch the races, it's been in making F1 fans out of 71 million Americans who don't. Today, F1 fans

are estimated to be around 40% female, up from 8% in 2017, and more culturally diverse, with multiple ways to engage with the sport. According to F1 commentator and content creator Toni Cowan-Brown, "There isn't just one way to be an F1 fan anymore."

Athletes too are double jobbing as creators, building their own media platforms and leveraging fan interest to build and even restore reputation. Take golfer and recent US Open Champion Bryson De Chambeau, who has leveraged YouTube to connect with fans, control his narrative, and grow the game he loves. With over 700,000 subscribers, his channel provides an unfiltered look at his personality, fostering authentic engagement that transcends traditional media.

"My mission is to continue to expand the game, grow the game globally, domestically. YouTube has really helped me accomplish some of that. Consequently, I think people have seen who I am on YouTube, which has been fantastic, 'cause then I get to play off it. It just feeds itself out there."



Infiltrating sporting rituals

Netflix, David Madrid

Taking the professional tennis tradition of match winners signing the camera lens, Carlos Alcaraz instead gave it a curious touch – this time writing cryptic notes instead of his signature, using live TV channels around the world to advertise his new streaming content partnership with Netflix.

THE TAKEAWAY:

A more accessible sport equates to more effective work. Brands must embrace this multi-platform causal fandom. From F1 to the Olympics and casual football, the next generation of fans represent the opportunity for brands and sport - Understanding that their rules of engagement is crucial to success.

This shift will offer brands innovative advertising opportunities, beyond rights holders to infiltrate the games, including sponsored segments, product placement, cross-platform integration and year-round engagement.

BRANDS TO PLAY IN EXTRA TIME

Sport is no longer confined to seasons or stadiums.

With 40% of EU citizens and 63.5% of the UK population engaging in sport weekly, the opportunity for brands extends far beyond traditional sponsorships.

Fans don't stop talking just because the final whistle has been blown. With the average football fan engaging in 8 hours of football content per week; there are huge opportunities for brands to infiltrate this constant conversation to drive on-going engagement while building long term brand advocacy with fans.

Brands can drive maximum impact for their activity by broadening their approach in terms of time; adopting a

strategy that focuses on fan behaviour, not the physical or time confines of the sponsored property itself.

Just look to the Summer Olympics. The Games might only last two weeks, but an athlete's journey is a four-year marathon. Smart brands know this, leveraging year-round engagement to deliver a greater return on investment.



Allianz gets ready for the best

Allianz, Ogilvy Italy

Allianz Italia shows the value of preparation and works with seven extraordinary athletes, icons across various disciplines and even members of the State Police Sports Group, 'Fiamme Oro' to show their journey of preparation to compete or engage in Paris 2024. "Get Ready For The Best" shows the role and dynamic of each person's relationship with preparation in their lives.



Orange gets Belgian hearts beating

Orange, Ogilvy Belgium

Orange looks to connect the heart of Belgium with its Olympic heroes. As an official partner of Team Belgium for the 2024 Olympic Games, Orange leveraged the power of its social platforms to bridge the gap between athletes and fans, sharing exclusive behind-the-scenes stories of each from the preparation stages, through to the games – and then post the games, where their roles are perhaps reversed.



Decathlon dresses thousands in Paris

Decathlon, Ogilvy Paris

As the provider of the uniform for over 45,000 volunteers during the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Decathlon first unveiled the uniform, a key symbol of The Games in March 2024 with the commitment to get as many people as possible moving through the magic of sport with the film “Tous les sports se jouent”.

In the world of sport, the emphasis has been on performance, surpassing oneself and sacrifice, Decathlon reminds us that at the origin of sport, there is this innate and universal human instinct for play. It is through the pleasure we take in playing a sport that we progress and reach the highest summits. An ode to the game, but also an ode to The Games... since the film reminds us of what has been right in front of us all along, and that it is no coincidence that they are called the Olympic Games.



T-Mobile keeps things moving

T-Mobile, Ogilvy Czech Republic

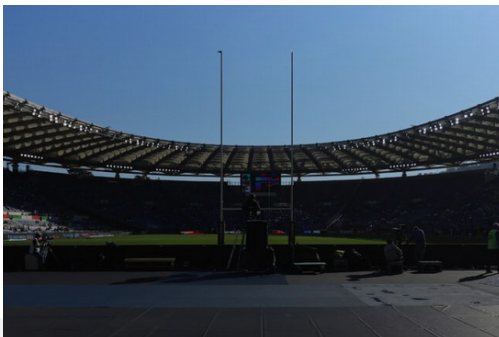
In the Czech Republic, T-Mobile has set up the T-Mobile Olympic Run, it is not just a one-time event; it is a long-term activity – not only during Olympic year. It is an event to demonstrate the brands commitment to fostering a culture of health, wellness, and community engagement through a long-term initiative rooted in the values of the Olympic movement – promoting inclusivity, teamwork and determination.

THE TAKEAWAY:

Look beyond the physical and time footprint of the sponsorship to drive maximum engagement and deliver return on investment. There are opportunities for brands in the preparation before the event or game and even beyond the players or athletes themselves.

ENHANCED FAN EXPERIENCE

The world of fan experience is evolving, driven by technology, brand experiences, and shifting consumer expectations. We're witnessing exciting innovation gamification and experiential activations, extending fan connection points and creating new, memorable occasions. The drive for a more inclusive fan experience is pushing brands to think beyond major events and address the needs of often overlooked communities.



Guinness, UK

Guinness leveraged its sponsorship of the 2024 Guinness Six Nations to team up with broadcaster ITV to enhance accessibility in sports broadcasting. Introducing Live Descriptive Audio Commentary for two of the Championships biggest games. Viewers could turn on the audio description function on their TVs to hear the commentary, making it easier for people with visual impairments to follow along and enjoy the game - 71% of whom engage with sport through TV and radio, but are not able to fully experience the game at home with standard commentary and subtitles.



Coca-Cola gets you to the game

Coca-Cola, WPP Open X team

With #FindYourSeat, we helped Coca-Cola turn the most unaffordable seats of Paris 2024 into the most accessible ones. Thanks to a 2-month nationwide treasure hunt, Coca-Cola let GenZ to attend the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This campaign is the top performer on the Coca-Cola app in France since its launch. If the Olympics were giving out medals for campaigns, this would surely be gold.

THE TAKEAWAY:

Enhancing the fan experience, from spectacular events, to deeper interaction and accessibility, is now the priority. Leveraging technology and experiential marketing to drive this connection to fan.

FANS' LOYALTY NO LONGER LIES JUST WITH CLUBS, BUT PLAYERS

Forget team loyalty – in the global arena, it's all about the players. Case in point: South Korea, where nearly a quarter of the population are diehard Tottenham Hotspur fans, thanks to national hero Son Heung-min.

This isn't just a Korean thing. A whopping 25% of football fans worldwide now pledge allegiance to individual athletes over specific teams. International broadcasting and social media have turned these players into global icons with massive followings. Just look at Cristiano Ronaldo, the most-followed individual

on Instagram with 673 million followers. He is also the leading sports personality on X, with over 111 million followers whilst, sports broadcaster ESPN is the most followed news agency on TikTok with 46.1 million followers.

FANS' LOYALTY NO LONGER LIES JUST WITH CLUBS, BUT PLAYERS



Paneka bids farewell to Maradona

*The Ball of God x Paneka, Ogilvy
Amsterdam/Social.Lab*

Together with Paneka, an independent football magazine in Madrid, we honoured the passing of football legend Diego Maradona by releasing a football into the sky from his boyhood neighbourhood in Buenos Aires. Captured on film and released on social, the film reached more than 47 million, through the affection with which he was held as a footballer by fans around the globe.

THE TAKEAWAY:

The world's top footballers now have a bigger following than the clubs they play for. Sporting organisations have a job to do in attracting league fans into the sport, rather than individuals.

THE RISE OF FAN COMMUNITIES

For decades, the sports economy was a closed system

with one-way communications from leagues to broadcasters to fans. However, the ecosystem has fundamentally changed. Fans have evolved from mere spectators into co-creators who want to own, drive, and define the games they love, not just sit in the stands. 69% of people want brands to give fans a seat at the table, shaping everything from marketing campaigns to product development.

Just look at the “Super League”. It was fan backlash that halted those plans. Brands are taking note, and rewarding and working with fan communities to spark connection.



Coca-Cola finds stars to light up the Olympics

Coca-Cola, WPP Open X team

D-100 before the Olympics. As a worldwide partner of Paris 2024, Coca-Cola offered French people the opportunity to become official Olympic torchbearers. The brand chose inspiring women and men with unique background stories that embody this Olympic spirit. For each administrative region, Coca-Cola chose one torchbearer and turned them into ambassadors by putting them on the front page of L'Equipe, French's iconic daily newspaper, just like any other athlete.

THE TAKEAWAY:

To drive long-term loyalty and deeper connections, brands and sports organisations should adopt a fan first model, creating value driven interactions and two way conversations for impact.



A win for Germany is a win for Deutsche Bank's customers

Deutsche Bank, Ogilvy Germany

Engaging with fan communities isn't limited to clubs or official sponsors. Ahead of the European Football Championship, Deutsche Bank's BahnCard discount card offered a unique incentive: if Germany won, the Fan BahnCard would be extended by a year, free of charge. This innovative approach demonstrates how brands can capitalise on the passion and loyalty of sports fans, driving deeper engagement and creating memorable connections with their audience.

SPORTS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

People often say that sport is a mirror of society,
but at Ogilvy we understand that sport can inspire
brands and people to impact the world.

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.”

Nelson Mandela

These words resonate deeply
with us in everything we do.

And we understand that we can't do it on our own. Collaboration and willingness to work with others for the common good is essential.



Dove drives women's sport forward

Dove, Ogilvy UK

Nearly half (45%) of girls quit sport by the age of 14, often due to body insecurities. Dove, *Hard Knocks*, illuminates the issue and effects of low body confidence among young girls.



Increasing visibility for women's sport

20x20, Ogilvy Ireland

20x20 was a social movement that sought to change the cultural perception of women in sport in Ireland. It was enabled by a first-in-market partnership between 5 brand sponsors brought together by the Federation of Irish Sports in pursuit of a common goal. Increasing media coverage, participation & attendance for women's sport by 20%.

The campaign helped six attendance records for women's sport in the first year whilst, at the end of the three years 80% of Irish people were more aware of women's sport and 80% thought it was cooler.

For sponsors and rights holders, they can utilise their platforms in major sporting events, when they attract the largest audiences, to address and tackle wider societal issues. Ensuring a clear brand and community role is key to this approach.

More than 40% of French people say they have been victims of cyber-violence. The phenomenon particularly affects youth, LGBTQI+ people, minorities, and women. With the spotlight on sport this year during **the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games**, to mark Safer Internet Day,



Holding a mirror up to society

Allianz France, Ogilvy UK

Allianz France chose to tackle cyberbullying through the testimonies of its Team Allianz athletes. "Le revers de la médaille" ("Every Medal Has Two Sides"), created by Ogilvy Paris, aims to drive impact through testimonials shared by 8 Team Allianz athletes, who disclose the most telling insults on social media they or their peers have had to endure.



Carling Black Label Soccer Song for Change

Carling, Ogilvy South Africa

Despite constitutional protections, gender-based violence in South Africa remains widespread. Carling Black Label recognised the need to acknowledge that alcohol can be part of the problem and has used its status as a beacon of masculinity to challenge how society, specifically men react to violence against women with the #NoExclude campaign.

Research showed abuse rates spiked after big soccer matches, where tension is high and a lot of alcohol is consumed. Leveraging the sponsorship of the Soweto Derby, Ogilvy Cape Town and Carling Black Label had a female choir hijack the national football anthem, Masambe Nono. Fans sang along with gusto, until half way through, the choir changed the lyrics to highlight the issue of gender-based abuse.



Coca-Cola, It's Magic When the World Comes Together

Coca-Cola, WPP Open X team

Coca-Cola reminded us all of the 'Real Magic' of human connection through the launch of 'It's magic when the world comes together' – an emotive campaign that celebrates the belief in the power of inclusivity and cross-cultural connection at the Olympic and Paralympic Games Paris 2024.

Coca-Cola's iconic hug motif is at the centre of the theme for Paris 2024, the brands multi-channel campaign showcases the collective power of sport to unify people and celebrate their differences. Coca-Cola's brand campaign is inspired by iconic moments of coming together between competitors at past Olympic Games – From the 12 swimmers who hugged each other at the 4x100m relay at the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, to Olympic Bronze Medallist, John Wing, who wrote to the international Olympic committee to champion all athletes coming out together at the Closing Ceremony in 1956 Melbourne.

THE TAKEAWAY:

Sport is the single biggest lever to positively impact society, when engaging through purpose brands and organisations must authentically walk the talk, be there for the long-haul and for the communities in which it's engaging with.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR...

Inspiring Brands

Continue to focus on the fans but think beyond the big game or championship. Don't just slap your logo on a billboard. Tap into the wider world of sports culture and its power away from the field of play. Tell stories. Engage with sports communities, conversations and creators. Look to sport partnerships for opportunities to lead culture, be a force for good and positively impact the world.

Inspiring Fans

Spectatorship is going to get a lot more interesting. Fan communities will have more influence than ever, consuming sport in new ways across an increasing number of channels, often two at a time. We'll continue to witness innovation in blending the URL fan experience with the IRL one. Reflecting the values of a new generation, fan expectation on sport and its sponsors will heighten, demanding positive impact on the issues they face. The influence of star athletes will continue to rise, and their channels transformed into even stronger platforms.

Inspiring Sport

Heightened expectations. Invest in your brand. Be less rigid, more open, cover more topics. Prioritise fan experience and engagement. Understand the shift in athletes as brands, leverage the opportunity for partnership to drive growth and engagement. Sports are a lifestyle as well as a passion. Embrace the opportunity to collaborate with non-traditional partners, such as fashion and tech partners, they can help sports reach new audiences.



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