

Marketing to Sports Fans - US - 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and the sports market.
- How sports fans engage with and follow sports and how to cultivate fandom
- Technological innovations that have impacted sports and will continue to do so
- The opportunities ancillary games around sports provide brands

Overall, 81% of adult consumers follow at least one sport, and on the whole, fans care deeply about sports. Three in five sports fans consider themselves to be passionate fans, with one third of fans overall categorizing themselves as very passionate. That passion is one reason sports are ripe for brand investment and marketing, as they offer a captive, engaged audience every day of the year.

COVID-19 obviously had a major impact on the sports world as it created a monumental moment in the history of sports – they all stopped. Sports entities learned to employ new tactics to reach and engage fans since the onset of the pandemic. Now that stadiums are packed with fans again, these brands now have additional methods to engage fans both in attendance and at home.

The future of sports fandom is dependent on appealing to the next generations of fans. Only three sports (basketball, boxing/MMA and soccer) are seeing great success among the youngest generation of adult fans, Gen Z. Other sports should look to these three sports for inspiration on how to better appeal to these younger fans, as otherwise they will continue to see their core fans age without supplementing them with new fans.

Women's sports are an underutilized segment of the sports industry that holds tremendous potential for growth. Although women's sports may seem more commonplace today, they are still very much in their infancy as a professional institution, which makes their already apparent success even more impressive.



“Sports remain a powerful unifying force, capable of bringing people of all different types of backgrounds together to feel part of the same community. Sports fans are a devoted and engaged audience, well suited for brand integration and marketing.”

– Colin O'Brien, Sports Analyst

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As a result of greater investment in women's sports, fandom has increased. Brands should absolutely look to get involved now and help continue the momentum of women's sports.

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