

The Sports Connection

CONTENT SOCIAL SPORT

BY MISHA SHER, HEAD OF SPORT & ENTERTAINMENT, MEDIACOM EMEA 29 JUN 2016

Sports are intrinsically live, global and social. It's the perfect platform for advertisers to create content that connects with passionate consumers.

The appeal of live sports is unprecedented. In the US, 49 out of the top 50 TV programs last year were NFL games. The big four US broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC) made 37% of their total 2014-2015 ad revenue (or \$8.47 billion) from sports, even though the broadcasts made up a small fraction of their programming schedules.

And while 50% of general entertainment shows are viewed live, that figure leaps to 96% for televised sports. Fans need to know what happens to their teams. You can't timeshift your viewing of the Super Bowl, Wimbledon or the Olympics.

Fortunately, studies from Brandweek, Gallup and others indicate that sports create an environment conducive to building affinity and sales. Data from multiple markets shows that brand consideration and purchase by fans of a sponsored property increase by 35% to 55%. It's no surprise, then, that the sports sponsorship category is now worth a whopping \$62 billion globally, with \$21.5 billion in the US alone.

Make the experience even more amazing

People are drawn to sports because they offer unscripted drama from one second to the next.

Anything can happen! Consider [Leicester City](#): the football team that beat 5,000 to 1 odds to win the Premier League Championship. They may be a local team from East Midland of England but they captured imagination of millions around the world. And that's the power of sport.

Making sponsorship successful comes down to a brand's ability to develop an authentic story that isn't just accepted by the fans but that actually enhances the overall experience. Indeed, the world's largest job site, offers a great example.

Indeed wanted to build a stronger brand, so it [partnered](#) with football's newly-created [International Champions Cup](#) (ICC). It co-opted its global positioning, "How the World Works," to create "[How Football Works](#)," and featured its ads for the many different kinds of jobs available behind the scenes. Fans could apply to work alongside ICC staff for select matches and an overall campaign included bespoke [videos](#) highlighting the behind-the-scenes roles that help make football successful. Results included a 10% uptick in aided awareness.

Talk to the fans, not at them

Given that social media has given consumers a voice they've never had before, it's also important that a sponsoring brand speak *to* and not *at* the fans.

Marketers have, for example, created Google+ hang outs where fans can participate in

discussions, compete in video games and take part in other activities, making them feel like participants rather than spectators.

Sony Xperia tapped into this trend by creating the [Champions Sofa](#) as part of [its UEFA Champions League sponsorship](#) (“Shoes off, please.”). Putting the Xperia phone at the heart of the fan experience, Sony selected five sets of fans and captured [their reactions](#) to goals, referee decisions and other key moments to create social buzz and connect with the wider fan community.

In closing, brand purpose is just as important as ever, but – when it comes to sports – keep an eye on it through the lens of a fan. If you do, you’ll be far more likely to create sponsorships that not only live alongside the most amazing moments of play but also make those moments even better.

CONTENT SOCIAL SPORT