



# WINNING WITH FANS

HOW BRANDS CAN HARNESS  
THE POWER OF SPORTS FAN MOTIVATIONS

The FIFA Football World Cup is the world's biggest sporting event and equally colossal in terms of advertising spend!



1.5  
BILLION

People watched the 2022 World Cup Final <sup>1</sup>

\$1  
BILLION

Spent on advertising by FIFA World Cup sponsors in the build up to the WC<sub>3</sub>



74.4  
MILLION

People liked Lionel Messi's World Cup Instagram post, making it the most liked post in Instagram's history<sup>2</sup>



Like the Olympics, Superbowl and other major sporting events it represents a prime opportunity for brands – but also, a highly competitive one.

1. FIFA
2. BBC
3. Global Data 2022

# HOW CAN YOU CUT THROUGH THE NOISE TO WIN WITH FANS?

Brand Genetics has conducted a deep dive into the evidence-based, expert endorsed behavioral science on the underlying motivations of sports fans.

We then explored how these motivations came to life during the FIFA World Cup 2022 – engaging real fans from Brazil, China, UK & US over the period of the tournament.



4 40

markets explored

world cup fans engaged

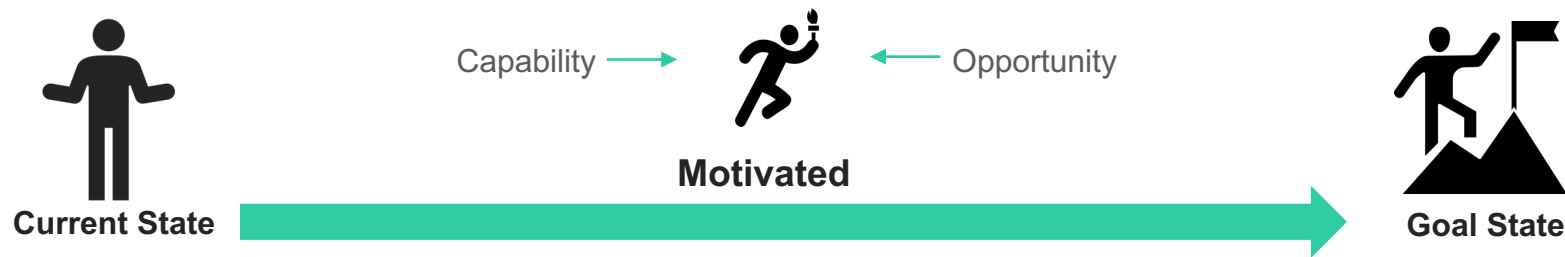
6 240

weeks of interaction

hrs of content analyzed

# BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE IS YOUR SECRET WEAPON

Convincing consumers to act requires an understanding of the underlying behavioural drivers - a.k.a **motivations - the 'why' behind the 'what' of consumer behaviour**



1

Motives are **underlying goals that guide behavior** – we do things because they align with our motives

2

Motives matter because unlike attitudes, beliefs and values, they can **explain, predict and influence behavior change**

3

Brands can **unlock growth by aligning with and supporting people's underlying motives**

**By ensuring your brand is aligned with fans' motivations for watching sports, you will make it more relevant and engaging – and drive them to buy**

# SPORTS FANS MOTIVATIONS

In this report we bring to life the 8 globally validated drivers of sports fan behaviour



Entertainment



Eustress



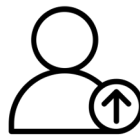
Escapism



Aesthetic



Group Affiliation



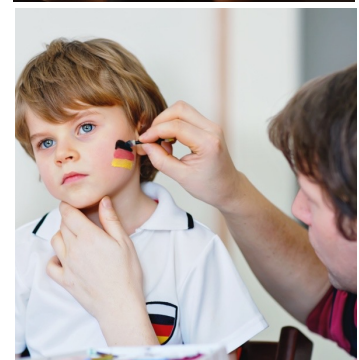
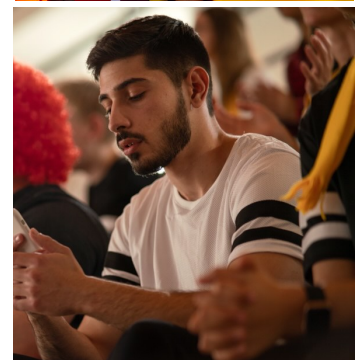
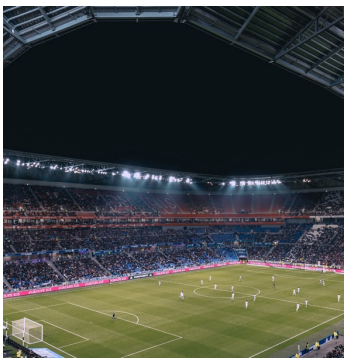
Self-esteem



Family



Economic Gains



# THREE WAYS YOU CAN USE MOTIVATIONS TO HELP YOUR BRAND WIN WITH SPORTS FANS!

1

## BUILD RELEVANCE

Scope which motivations  
are most relevant to your  
target audience

2

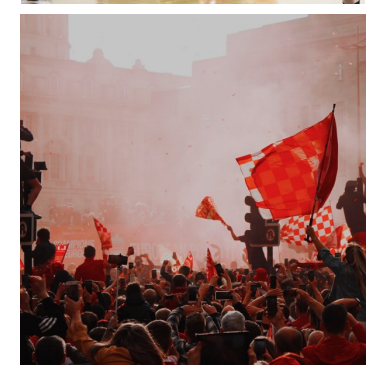
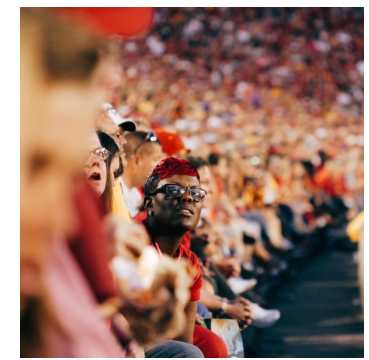
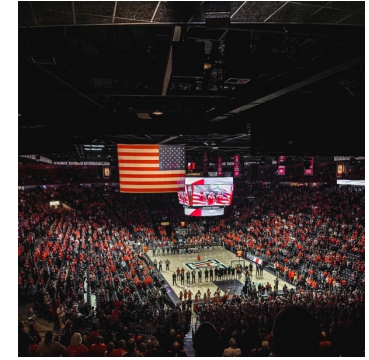
## IDENTIFY DISTINCT SPACES

Map the competition  
against the motivations to  
identify distinctive spaces

3

## CREATE ENGAGEMENT

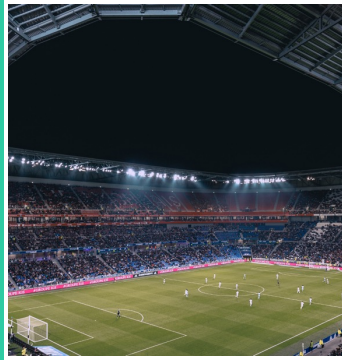
See how the motivations  
come to life to inspire  
and guide winning  
creative work





# ENTERTAINMENT

The drive to engage in sport for the enjoyment of the performance, drama and energy of the World Cup. In the same way some enjoy a film or TV show, others get an identical kick out of watching the game unfold.



## 🏈 How did this play out in the FWC 2022?

### YEAR OF THE UNDERDOG



Saudi Arabia's early victory over Argentina ignited the underdog spirit of the World Cup. In China, turned to underdog narratives to get their entertainment kick

*"Even though our team didn't qualify, the story of the big upsets across the tournament is enough to get me in the football spirit"*  
**M, CN**

### STARS & THE LIGHTS



Star players are often centre of the show. In the US, where 'tribalism' is less evident in football, fans were fixated on player narratives (old stars & emerging talents)

*"I am most looking forward to what star shines, new players or stories I haven't heard."* **M, USA**

### 'FAN-TERTAINMENT'



Fans wanted to be immersed in the debate – in Brazil we saw 'meme-sharing', whilst Chinese fans turned to tactical analysis to stay entertained

*"It's so much more than the football, our group chat is filled with memes about all the Brazilian players & matches."* **F, BR**



**Nike's**  
**'footballverse'**  
ad focused on  
football narratives  
past, present and  
future as it  
brought to life the  
debate on the  
game's best-ever  
players through a  
match in the  
metaverse

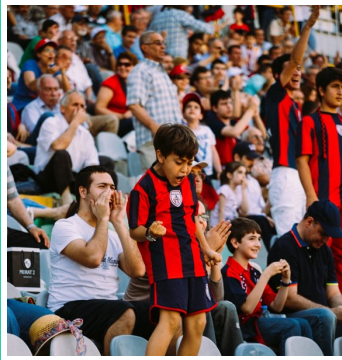






# EUSTRESS

Widely referred to as “positive stress”, this is the drive to engage in sports fandom due to the emotional ups and downs. Think of this as the ‘watch between your fingers’ excitement created by the unique jeopardy of live sport



## ⚽ How did this play out in the FWC 2022?

### EXPLOSIVE EMOTION



Fans go through genuine pain, stress & struggle before the unbounded positivity of a goal or a full-time whistle when the tension is resolved

*“The biggest difference at this stage is the fact the stakes are higher! It's so tense because we know that even just one small mistake could mean going home” **China Fan***

### INFECTIOUS



‘Fringe fans’ & even non-football fans in England couldn’t help but become caught up in the highly engaging peaks of drama – they’re just as nervous as the rest, literally on the edge (or off) their seat!

*“Standing in front of the TV, anxious. Even my Mum was unable to sit!” **England Fan***

### ADRENALINE JUNKIES



As their team wasn’t playing Fans in China looked for ways to create eustress to make it even more exhilarating, e.g., by betting or through sweepstakes

*“We wouldn’t usually be doing it but {betting} made the game even more exciting & I felt like I had my own team” **China Fan***



Budweiser latched onto the nerves, anticipation and tension of the pre-match walk out in their **2022 World Cup campaign**, using the tunnel to own their place within the Eustress journey.





# ESCAPISM

A rare opportunity to break away from daily life's struggles and indulge in a past-time or hobby



## ⚽ How did this play out in the FWC 2022?

### TIME-ZONE



Fans adopted rituals & found creative ways to watch matches. In China, we saw fans gathered in hotel rooms in an organised attempt to catch late kick-offs without disturbing loved ones at home

*“There’s a hotel nearby where someone has organised to screen the games that kick off late at night!”*  
**China Fan**

### GLOBAL CONTEXT



Fans looked to the World Cup as an outlet, a chance to escape current struggles & offer hope – often this means escaping the ‘daily routine’

*“Well, our first match is today at 1pm so everyone is at work - but I’m off today so will watch at home with my son dressed in red & celebrate with a nice meal”* **England Fan**

### ESCAPE STRUGGLE



The negative political focus was hot on the lips for almost every second of the competition build-up, meaning true escapism wasn’t easily achieved

*“I’m not looking forward to the controversy about it being in Qatar and the issues with human rights. The negativity around it”*  
**USA Fan**

*Coca-Cola*

**Coca Cola created an immersive and uplifting visual world through use of confetti and invigorating sounds in their ad 'Street' – part of their 'Believing is Magic' campaign**





# AESTHETIC

Derived from appreciating the beauty and perfection of the athleticism on show. There is a reason we know it as the 'beautiful game', right?



## ⚽ How did this play out in the FWC 2022?

### CINEMATIC VIEWING



Fans need space & focus to appreciate – the environment is key. Many fans in England favoured a more 'cinematic' in-home viewing experience to appreciate the spectacle

*"I 100% prefer being at home or a friend's house with friends of family for the group stages as you can properly watch the games instead of someone blocking you or standing in your way" **England Fan***

### LOWER STAKES, MORE AESTHETICS



During the early stages of the tournament, when stakes are lower - people were more willing to forgo the big crowds & atmosphere to closely appreciate the action

*"Due to work I recorded it on DVR and will watch it after work alone where I can properly focus" **USA Fan***

### INTERNATIONAL BEAUTY

Different nations appear to have their own mark of beauty and style – fans spoke in admiration of Brazilian 'flare' and Moroccan 'fight' which were deemed 'beautiful' in their own right

*"I usually like goals, but Morocco were amazing to watch, despite it being 0-0!" **England Fan***



LOUIS VUITTON

***Louis Vuitton displayed the beauty and intensity of the World Cup through a smart new narrative with its 'Victory is a State of Mind' campaign.***





# GROUP AFFILIATION

Forging deeper bonds with friends, the nation, or whoever else we are watching with. It's that drive to create shared moments and to be amongst the crowd - anything that allows us to strengthen social links



## ⚽ How did this play out in the FWC 2022?

### PEOPLE'S GAME



Some fans want to watch with people who have a similar passion for/knowledge of football (think high-energy fan zones)  
Others look for a calmer, analytical vibe (think big TV & sound system)

*"I 100% prefer being at home or a friend's house with friends of family for the group stages as you can properly watch the games instead of someone blocking you or standing in your way" **England Fan***

### FOMOOF (fear of missing out on football)



There's genuine despair when they aren't with their crew to share historical moments ( both highs & lows)

*"Due to work I recorded it on DVR and will watch it after work alone where I can properly focus" **USA Fan***

### ONLINE TRIBES



Fans connected via online messaging or social media platforms to live through the highs and lows of the match with loved ones who are watching in different pubs, different cities or even different countries

*"I usually like goals, but Morocco were amazing to watch, despite it being 0-0!" **England Fan***

# 抖音

*In China, where kick off times spilled into the night, Douyin enabled fans to participate in real-time conversations and celebrate the biggest moments together through the app's comments section of their livestream.*







## SELF-ESTEEM

Sport is a core part of many fans' identity. As a result, the feeling of pride and ego when your team comes out on top is linked to our own self perception. That halo effect when your team is on top drives engagement and some unique behaviours



### ⚽ How did this play out in the FWC 2022?

#### NATIONAL PRIDE REDEFINED

Fans wear country's colours, it becomes celebrated, inclusive and acceptable to the masses - significantly more permissible than on regular team level

*"Different to normal, the WC made me wear my country jersey, buy accessories, dress with my family and get together to watch the games – this really only happens during the World Cup." **Brazil Fan***

#### LOSING IS HARD

Negativity bias was distinctly evident, as the sheer fear of being knocked out was an overriding emotion throughout the World Cup

*"I'm worried, if Brazil loses it will affect me a lot because I've never seen Brazil as world champions, seeing it is one of my dreams!" **Brazil Fan***

#### SECOND HOME TEAM

Some fans choose to support an alternative country to keep their hopes up – but this also raises the stakes. In China, fans who chose to support a team put themselves at risk of the ultimate disappointment

*"We're used to following teams from different countries, so I think its normal to get behind a different country too" **China Fan***



## Hisense

**Hisense's FWC ad slogan, which translates as 'China first, the world second' caused a Western media stir. But its true meaning was well-interpreted in China (highlighting the origins of the Hisense brand) - promoting a shared identity and sense of belonging, helping reinforce unity**





## FAMILY

Sport is an enjoyable excuse to spend time with loved ones, creating memories and bringing the family closer. Especially in families with young children, where the love for sports can be passed from one generation to another



## ⚽ How did this play out in the FWC 2022?

### NOSTALGIA



The World Cup is nostalgia-heavy – fans recall memories and past experiences and look to recreate them. Certain rituals, such as watching it with your kids, become engrained

*“We always celebrate the WC by meeting with friends and family, cheering together a lot! Whether it's a lunch, barbecue or meeting up at a bar.” **Brazil Fan***

### ROOT FOR YOUR ROOTS



In the US, it's not uncommon for fans to root for their country of heritage if their country of citizenship is eliminated

*“The Netherlands is usually my back up team because I have Dutch heritage” **USA Fan***

### PASSING THE BALL



Fans were seeing the World Cup as a chance to actively inspire the next generation and pass on their love for the game

*“I used to hear my dad talking about football all the time when I was growing up” **England Fan***



FAMILY



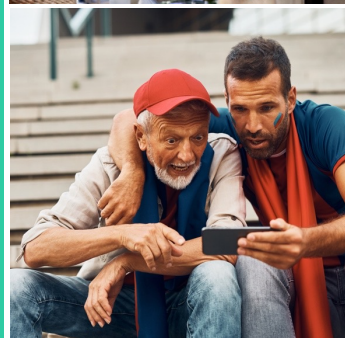
**Adidas' latest addition to their 'Impossible is Nothing' ad roster riffs on the idea of the World Cup as a 'family reunion' successfully bringing people back together in a way that resembles the 'good times' from childhood**





# ECONOMIC GAINS

Sometimes it's the potential economic gains that provides the motivation for fans to get involved with sport. This can also lend itself to the other motivations... Group Affiliation & Eustress for example.



## ⚽ How did this play out in the FWC 2022?

### RAISING THE STAKES



Fans lacked motivation after their team was knocked out (or didn't qualify) – so find ways to add layers of excitement to the viewing experience. Betting helps to find excitement in the potential for financial gain (or loss)

*“Everyone gets involved with the sweepstake and lottery during the World Cup, even our boss. We'll spend lunch times discussing how to win the most money and which teams to bet on.” **England Fan***

### A WAY TO BE INCLUDED



Fans used sweepstakes and wages amongst friends and colleagues to be part of the crowd, boosting their group affiliation motive by being in it together

*“Watching in bars, chatting with friends, buying lottery tickets together - always fun when the World Cup is on” **China Fan***

## ECONOMIC GAINS



**British beer brand Jubel ran their witty 'Jubellingham' campaign during the group stages, raising the stakes of its home nation's World Cup games by giving out a free beer in pubs for every goal Jude Bellingham scored**



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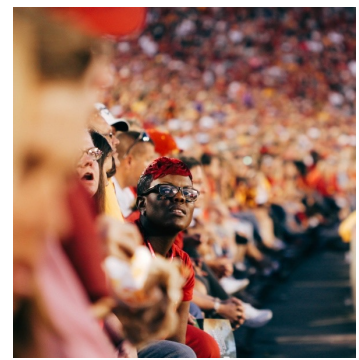
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DISTINCT SPACES**

**Map the competition  
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# BRAND GENETICS IN ACTION

LAYS IN ASIA



We helped PepsiCo understand how they best leverage their UCL sponsorship assets, gauging the resonance of specific motivational drivers and barriers, as well as the appeal of current Pepsi comms and activations in three key Asian markets, to ensure their social brands own share in the football occasion

BUD WORLD CUP



We uncovered foundational consumer insight, based on deep human / cultural truths, to help ensure Budweiser's 2022 FWC campaign not only drove sales, but also generated a meaningful connection for consumers with the brand purpose and creative



Unlocking growth  
by thinking human first



# UNLOCK THE POWER OF MOTIVATIONS TO DRIVE BRAND GROWTH

At Brand Genetics we are experts in harnessing the power of human motivations to unlock brand growth.

If you want to learn more about how to use these motivations to help your brand win with sports fans we can help.

[click here to get in touch](#)



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