

Scoring sports partnerships

How on-demand insights help you spot winning opportunities

GWI.



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Introduction

Sports partnerships and sponsorships are a powerful marketing tool. Choose wisely and you'll engage fans, drive long-term revenue and growth, and leave competitors in the dust.

In this guide, we'll explore how on-demand audience insights of the right caliber help you spot the right opportunities, and how to land the sports deals of your dreams.



01

The sports state of play



The world of sports is shifting faster than ever, with the rise of esports and the metaverse changing the way fans watch, support, and interact with the big game.

Our **GWI Sports** data set sheds some light on what's going on.



Viewership is changing

Sports still appeal to the masses, but TikTok is becoming the go-to platform for sports content. Outside China, there's been a 70% rise in fans using TikTok to follow sports. We're also seeing a shift towards gender equality driven by younger viewers, with 32% of Gen Z and millennials saying they watch women's only competitions, and 31% following a female athlete or women's team on social media.

There's money in the metaverse

From in-game advertising, to crypto-funded sports teams and loyalty programs, fans can now pay their way to unique interactive experiences with their favorite clubs and players. In Roblox's **WimbleWorld**, users can hang out with Wimbledon champions, style their avatars in designer clothing, and compete to unlock exclusive content. **NFTs are also a hit** with collectors, with 12% of sports fans outside China saying they buy them.

Interestingly, gym goers and Strava users have greater interest in the metaverse than console gamers.

Unique insights like these reveal hidden marketing opportunities. That's why it's so important to consider consumers' attitudinal and behavioral data when deciding which partners and ambassadors to work with.

Consumers interested in the metaverse say they'd use it for:

Virtual meetings

	
Cloud gamers	63
Console gamers	50
Boxing fans	50
Tennis players	44

Workouts

Strava users	58
Runners	46

Investments

Gym goers	55
Rugby fans	50
Sports players	45

Gaming

NBA fans	40
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Ask the expert

COPA90: the sports view



Simon Joyce

Chief Business Officer, COPA90

We're embarking on a new era of sports fandom and it's driving IP owners and rights holders to the frontline of innovation in a bid to engage and involve fans.

Without fans, sport ceases to exist in the form that has seen its exponential growth and success over the last few decades.

The importance of fandom and the relationship with fans has never been higher on the agenda across all stakeholders in sport, from rights holders to broadcasters, brands, media and athletes.

Evoking emotion, encouraging participation, creating exclusivity, and leaving a lasting impression is key.

“

Understanding and answering fans' motivations, behaviors, and demands should be the foundation to the next era of growth and transformation.



Challenges

The biggest challenge is figuring out how to stand out from the crowd and be relevant to the fans of the sport, tournament, or club you've partnered with. Too often the focus of sponsorship is the commercials; the rights, assets, and terms take center stage. Fans see through sponsors trying to exploit them for quick gains.

Challenge yourself and the rights holder you're partnering with to really understand the motivations and

behaviors of the fans that make up the domestic, regional, and international communities.

What does the data, research and insight really tell you? Where is there a gap that your brand can fill? And how can you play a meaningful role in the lives of fans at times that make sense for them.

The worst thing to do is to go in blind and brand-first.

Opportunities

One of the critical reasons for choosing sponsorship is to connect your brand with a property and build positive relationships and associations with the people who one day might buy your product or service - the fans.

It's the untold stories and often overlooked characters and personalities that will act as a catalyst to scale and grow fan bases and build upon the passionate communities that already exist. It's all about democratizing discovery and making sport universally accessible.

Brands that take a longer-term approach, show a real commitment, and create value-adding experiences that demonstrate a true understanding of their fandom will always win the hearts and minds of sports fans.

“

We're in a fan-first era and this is why, ultimately, we're all operating on their terms

02

Knowing your fans: why on-demand insights matter



Give the fans what they want.

It sounds so simple, but is often easier said than done. If the controversy around the European Super League is anything to go by, listening to what your fans want is critical to success. With the market changing rapidly, you need consumer insights faster than Usain Bolt to understand what matters to your target audiences - and more importantly, why. This will help you decide which partners are the best fit.



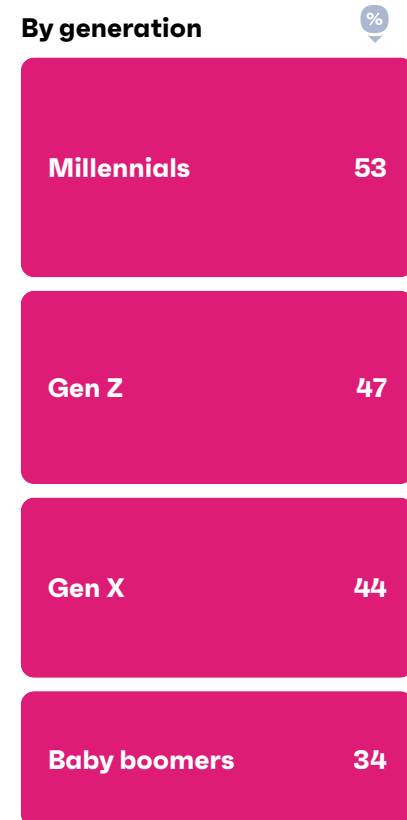
If you're relying solely on external bodies for insights, opportunities could be slipping through the cracks while you wait. The beauty of **on-demand insights** is having instant access to what you need - and more importantly, what you didn't know you needed. It's a competitive edge like no other.

Here's just a taste of the kind of global insights you can grab on demand.



The modern sports enthusiast

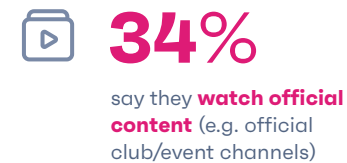
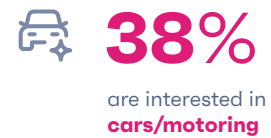
By generation



By interest



Surprising fan facts

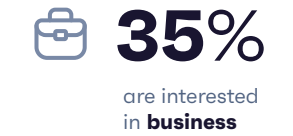
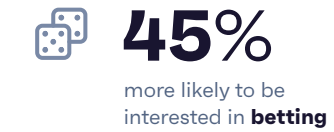


The modern esports enthusiast

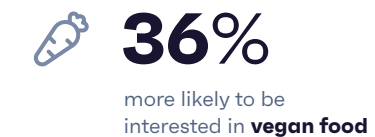
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Surprising fan facts



Source: GWI Sport Q4 2021



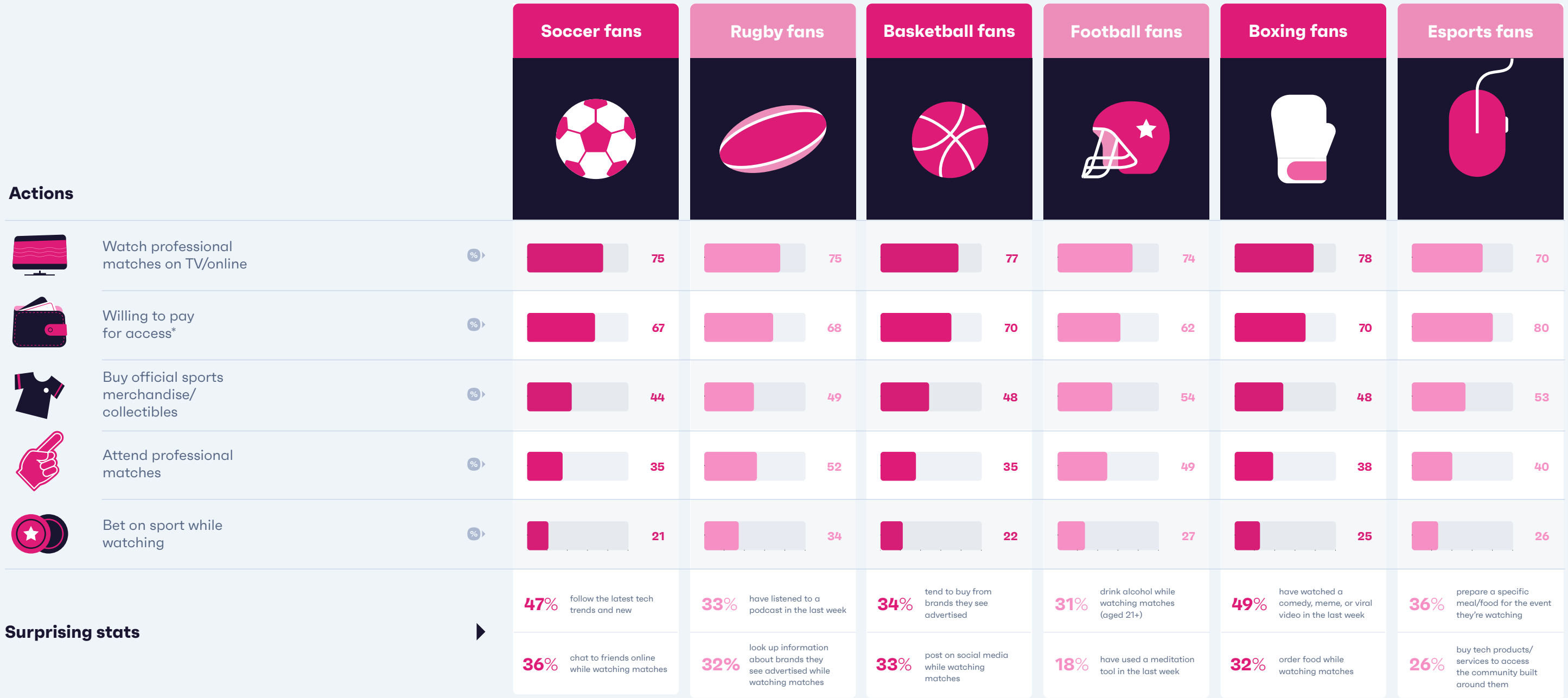
56% of
both sports
& esports
enthusiasts
notice shirt
sponsorship

Sports spotlight

Now let's go one step further and take a closer look at the behavioral and attitudinal consumer data behind 6 popular sports.

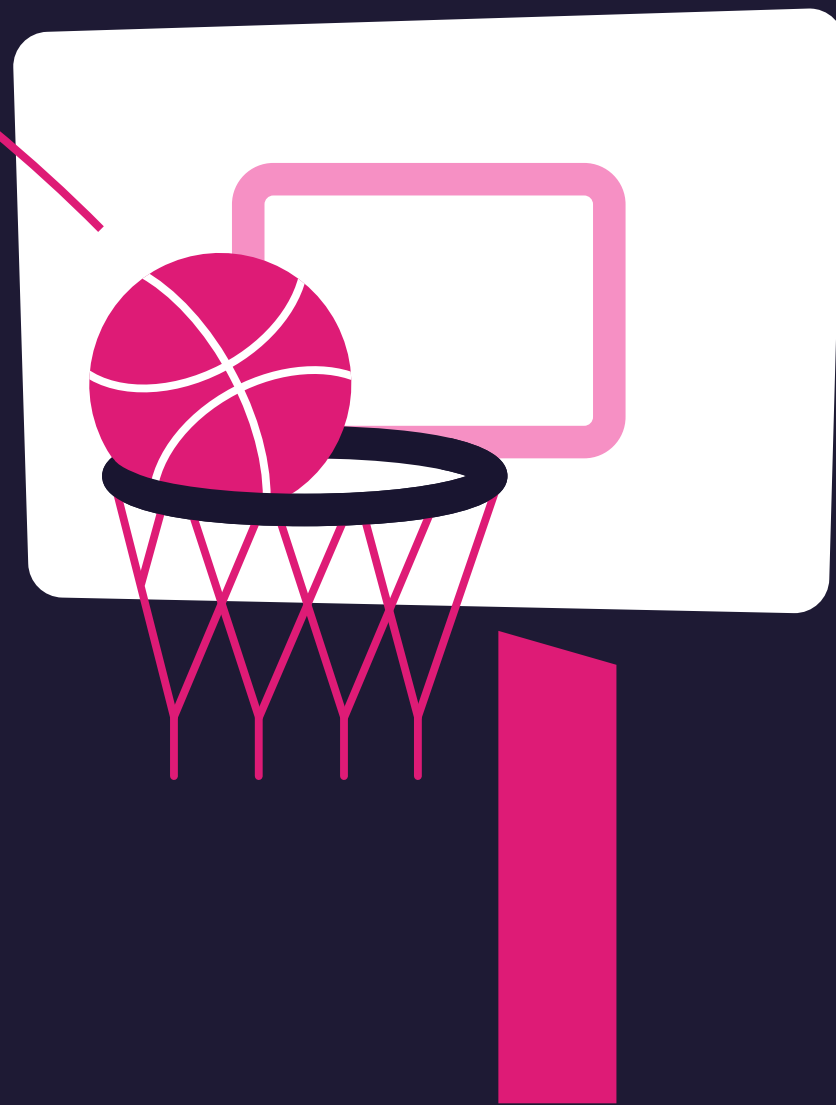
Granular data helps to explain what's driving fan interest and engagement. Armed with knowledge, you can identify links to new markets and partners who are aligned to your target audience.





03

Finding your true match



Partnerships and sponsorships are a great way to boost brand awareness, sales, loyalty, and ROI.

That is – provided you pick the right partner to help you grow.

Miss the mark, and you risk damaging your reputation and alienating fans. But with access to the right insights on tap, you can understand what your consumers really care about to find the right fit.



1

Nail your objectives

What do you want this partnership to achieve? Whether you're looking to sign a new kit sponsor, or launch a promotional campaign with a famous athlete, establish which key performance indicators (KPIs) you'll focus on to measure the success of your partnership.



Top tip

Authenticity is key to success. There should be a clear link to your brand (or your client's brand) that appeals to existing fan interests, as well as the target audiences you hope to reach.

2

Ask your target audience

Your consumers can tell you a surprising amount about what you need from a partnership deal. With audience insights on hand, it only takes a few seconds to understand what your consumers care about on a global and local scale.



Top tip

Get instant answers to thousands of audience questions on all sorts of topics in the **GWI platform**. Easily segment the data by generation to understand the differences between key consumer groups.

Get a true view of market potential

3

Comparing audiences from different markets lets you quickly identify crossover points in the data that align with existing customers' interests, your growth goals, and those of your prospective partner to find the perfect fit. This could be a brand your consumers buy from, other sports they follow, social media channels they use, or even activities they do regularly.



Top tip

Our dashboards let you compare up to 4 audiences in a single view for speedy trend spotting and campaign planning. Or dive into **crosstabs** to compare as many audiences and profiling points as you like.

Go even deeper

Global syndicated research is extensive, but if you still have unanswered questions about your audiences, there's a simple solution. Complement syndicated research with customized surveys to fill in any knowledge gaps and see the full picture of your consumers.



Top tip

Use our **custom research** services to ask any question you like to consumers across 48 countries. We can also run concept testing and track campaign effectiveness to make sure your partnerships are on point.

4

Align and empower your sales teams

Once you know where growth opportunities lie, find ways to connect new audiences back to your brand in an authentic way. Housing key insights in a dashboard makes it a breeze to collaborate internally, share knowledge, and really sell your vision to prospective partners.



Top tip

Our pre-built dashboards let you jump straight into top-line insights and quickly get to grips with specific audiences and topics. Customize them to suit your needs, share them in an instant.

5

6

Ask the analysts

We all need a little support sometimes. If you're short on time, new to the world of audience data, or simply unsure of the best way to benchmark and measure partnership performance, pull in someone who can help.



Top tip

Analyst hours are included in our custom research services for help with data pulls, ad-hoc analysis, presentations, reporting, and more. We'll assess your activations and highlight key strengths and opportunities.

Things you can ask with GWI.



What other markets, brands, and products excite baseball fans?



Which social media channels do NFL fans engage with most?



How many tennis fans also listen to podcasts?



Which fantasy leagues do consumers take part in?



Do boxing fans have any interest in beauty?



How frequently do consumers go to the gym?



Which sporting events are fans most interested in?



How do esports fans really feel about sponsorships?



How many motorsports fans buy NFTs?

04

Landing your dream pitch



Partnerships are a two-way street, so your pitch needs to hammer home the value you can deliver. Boosting revenue is an obvious goal, so think bigger.

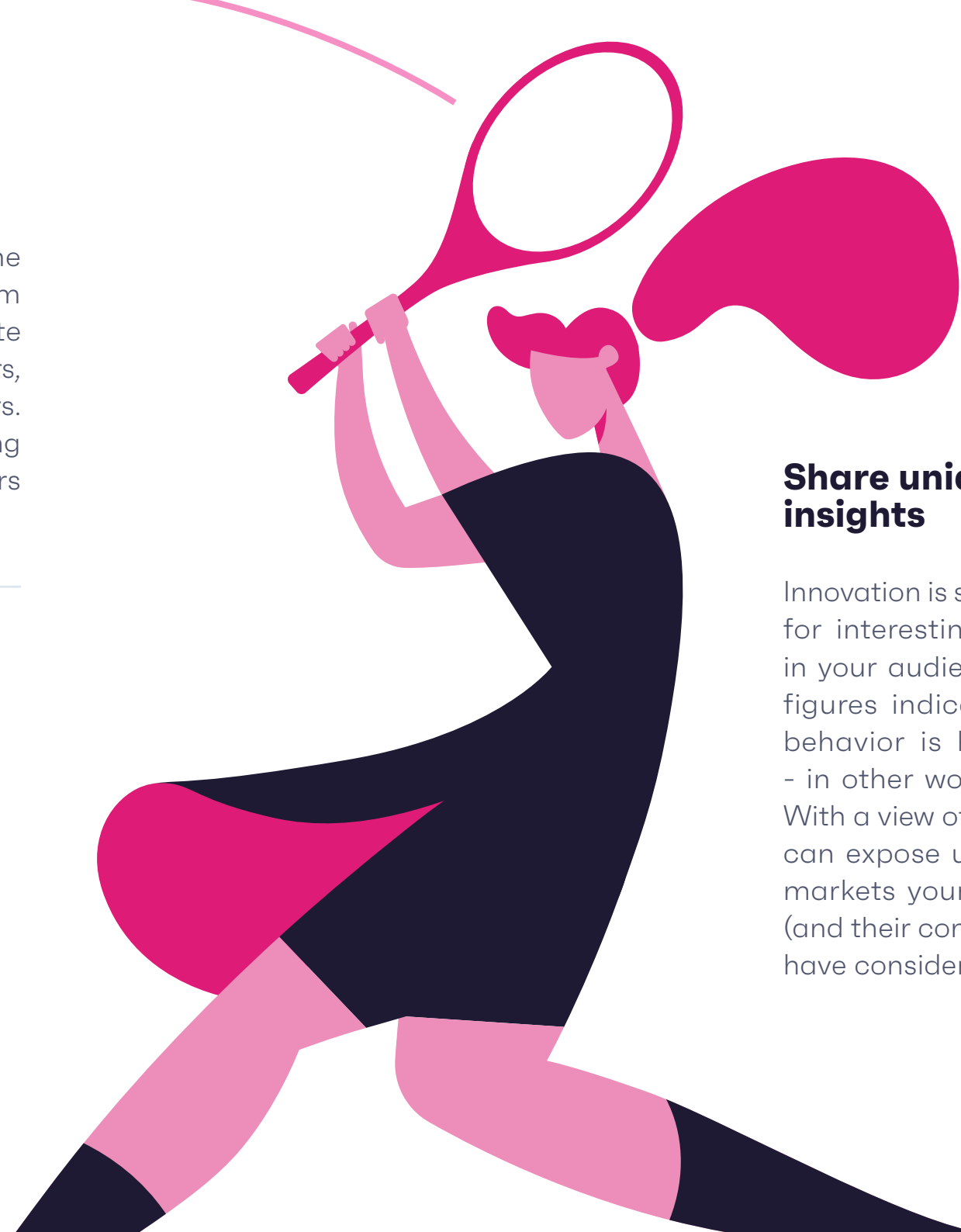
What else can you offer to get the deal over the line? Your audience size, breadth of sponsorship opportunities, and increased reach potential are all useful bargaining chips. Don't be afraid to show your prospect what they're missing.

Tot up your audience (then shout about it)

Look at all your online and offline customer marketing channels - from social media followers, to website visitors, to TV subscription streamers, to match attendees and supporters. A bigger fan base is more appealing to potential partners and sponsors looking to reach new audiences.

29%

of sports fans say if a brand or product sponsors their favorite sports league or team, they're likely to chat to family/friends about it



Share unique insights

Innovation is sure to impress, so look for interesting or unusual stories in your audience data. Over-index figures indicate where consumer behavior is higher than average - in other words, above the norm. With a view of emerging trends, you can expose untapped potential in markets your prospective partner (and their competitors) would never have considered.

Tell the right story

Show why you're the best fit. Find an engaging, relatable narrative in your data that unites both brands and audiences (and ideally, works on a global scale). Then blow their assumptions out of the water with unique insights into the market and future growth opportunities. If you wow them with data, they'll see you not only as a partner, but a trusted advisor too.

Ask the expert

Advanced Sponsorship Insights



Paulo Pinto
CEO



“

Audiences are the guiding principle for all sponsorship investments, as the purpose of sponsorship is to connect, in an emotional way, with the target brand personas.

The right story to tell is always one of alignment and incrementality that enhances the brand positioning and strategy.

Which gaps does it cover?
Which opportunities will it unveil?



Case study:

Fnatic



The problem

While the global esports industry is seeing exponential growth, not all businesses are aware of the opportunities it offers them. This was a challenge the **Fnatic** team faced when looking to scale their business.

To land the right partnerships, they needed a narrative that would stand out against the competition and prove why esports is worth the investment.

The solution

Using GWI, Fnatic built a robust cross-market pitching strategy, embedding unique audience insights at every stage. They hooked prospects in by making their pitch highly relevant to their interests, before educating them on the commercial value of highly engaged esports audiences.

Using behavioral and attitudinal audience data, Fnatic told an original, compelling narrative that seamlessly wove both brands together. All backed by credible, reliable data.



The result

This insights-led approach helped Fnatic successfully tap into new markets, scoring business deals with multiple high-profile brands.

The biggest wins included:

- ✓ Landing and expanding a partnership deal with a global CPG brand
- ✓ Securing a bespoke package for an influencer activation
- ✓ Exceeding targets by up to 180%
- ✓ Improving their pitching process with deeper insight



Key takeaways

Wondering if the partner or sponsor you're eyeing up is the right fit? Bringing **audience research** in-house is the fastest way to find out.

Use on-demand insights to tick these four boxes, and you'll leap ahead of the competition and drive scalable growth and ROI, with the right partners to help you tell your story.

Align with audiences

Tap into what your target audiences care about and why to create more engaging campaigns and build positive brand sentiment.

Be authentic

Work with partners who have your audiences' best interests at heart. If things feel fake or forced, fans won't buy it.

Get granular

Drill down into insights at sport, league, and even brand level to understand where fans' interests truly lie - even across markets.

Add value

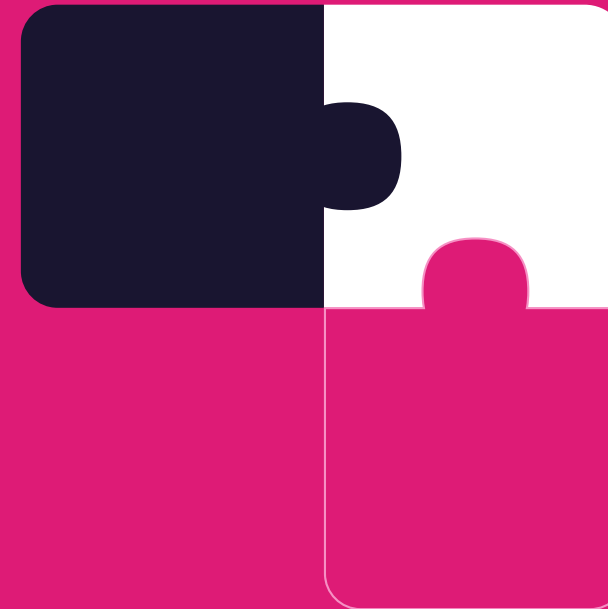
Sports fans crave interactive, inclusive experiences that bring them closer to the big game and the wider sports community.

A world of sports knowledge in **one** platform



GWI Core

Dig into the world's biggest digital consumer study



GWI Sports

Bring your fans into focus with deeper sports insights

GWI Custom

Go bespoke to fill any gaps and see the full picture of consumers

Methodology

This guide uses our GWI Sports data set, with a sample of 38,781 sports fans aged 16-64 in Q4 2021. Within this cohort there were 5,234 Gen Z, 11,712 millennials, 16,451 Gen X, and 5,384 baby boomers.

Sports enthusiasts are fans who say they are: very/extremely interested in sport, and view it at least once a week, with a sample of 16,359 sports

fans. Within this cohort, there are 2,380 Gen Z, 5,787 millennials, 6,465 Gen X, and 1,727 baby boomers.

Esports enthusiasts are respondents who say they are: very/extremely interested in esports, and view it at least once a week, with a sample of 7,941. Within this cohort, there are 1,680 Gen Z, 3,878 millennials, 2,179 Gen X, and 204 baby boomers.

This guide also looks at various sports fans. Within this there are 20,920 soccer fans, 4,248 rugby fans, 12,740 basketball fans, 7,325 football fans, and 8,562 boxing fans.

We've also used our May 2022 GWI Zeitgeist research, with a sample of 12,845 consumers in Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US, and our April

2022 GWI Zeitgeist research, with a sample of 12,803 consumers in Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US.

Esports fans include those who watch an esports tournament monthly, rather than those who just say they watch/follow the sport.

Find your perfect partner with GWI

We're home to the largest survey on the digital consumer. Find everything you could possibly want to know about your audience, in one super-simple platform.

48

countries

10,000+

brands

2.7Bn⁺

consumers represented

200,000+

profiling points

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