



The future is fan-tastic!

How fan data is transforming the future
of the sports industry

Table of content

#1

#2

#3

#4

#5

| | |
|--|-----------|
| What's the score? | 5 |
| Match day analysis: the current state of affairs. | 6 |
| 1. New technologies. | 6 |
| 2. Generating revenue both from fans and sponsors. | 9 |
| 3. 360° fan engagement. | 13 |
| 4. Audience understanding and facing the cookieless future | 16 |
| 5. Keep fans retained and returning | 20 |
| 6. Lessons from the pandemic | 21 |
| Hall of fame of Qualifio customer cases | 27 |
| Valencia CF | 27 |
| LOSC. | 28 |
| Toulouse FC. | 29 |
| Team strategy: top 7 interactive formats and best practices | |
| from top teams. | 30 |
| User generated content. | 30 |
| Advent calendars | 31 |
| Quizzes, swipers and personality tests | 31 |
| Polls and votes. | 32 |
| Arcade games | 32 |
| Predictions, battles and team selectors | 33 |
| Skill and instant win games | 33 |
| How Qualifio can help | 35 |



#1 What's the score?

The rapid rise and democratisation of technology in the past couple of decades has had and continues to have a transformative effect on **businesses worldwide and across all industries**, not only fundamentally changing the consumer experience but also revolutionising how organisations work. And the sports industry is no exception and has been evolving at a breakneck pace in recent years. **Advances in digital technology in particular are unlocking unprecedented growth and expansion opportunities** for sports clubs and associations, allowing them to bring their fans closer to them with innovative and personalised experiences.

The world we live in is in constant motion and evolution, and one of the major challenges of all sports organisations is **knowing how to adapt to these societal shifts, in an increasingly digitised world**. This state of affairs highlights the importance of the one constant that the industry can always count on and need to keep at the heart of everything they do to ensure their sustainability and further growth: **the fan**.

In this ebook we're going to be taking a deep dive into the sports industry and look at **how the industry has a fan-tastic and fan-centric future**. We'll get the ball rolling with a match day analysis of the current state of affairs, relaying a post-game interview with Belgian football club, RSC Anderlecht, then we'll be on the home stretch with some best practices and examples of great interactive sports campaigns, and rounding off with a slam dunk of customer cases and tips and tricks! (Reckon we could have squeezed any more sporting metaphors in there?!!)

So keep your eye on the ball and read on if you're looking to knock it out the park with your audience engagement and data collection strategy!

Match day analysis: the current state of affairs

#1 New technologies

The advancement of technology and more specifically digital technology in recent years can be considered **both as a curse and a blessing for the sports industry**: these innovations represent **huge opportunities** both in terms of attracting new audiences and of finding new revenue sources, but also involves the **significant risk** of organisations spreading themselves too thin and doing too much.

In their **recent report** about how digital transformation is changing the sports industry, Deloitte highlighted **4 aspects that technology is having a positive impact on**:

- 1 The creation of **new and innovative fan experiences** both during and after sporting events, and being able to capture viewership across multiple digital channels and devices. The NFL have for example seen a steady drop in their traditional broadcast television audiences, but a sharp rise in the number of fans who are streaming their games online in the past few years.
- 2 An **increase in fan engagement** by leveraging loyalty and the data shared by fans to personalise their experiences to their individual preferences.
- 3 The **opportunity to get more sponsors involved**, and also to diversify the types of sponsors.
- 4 The possibility of **adding new revenue sources**.

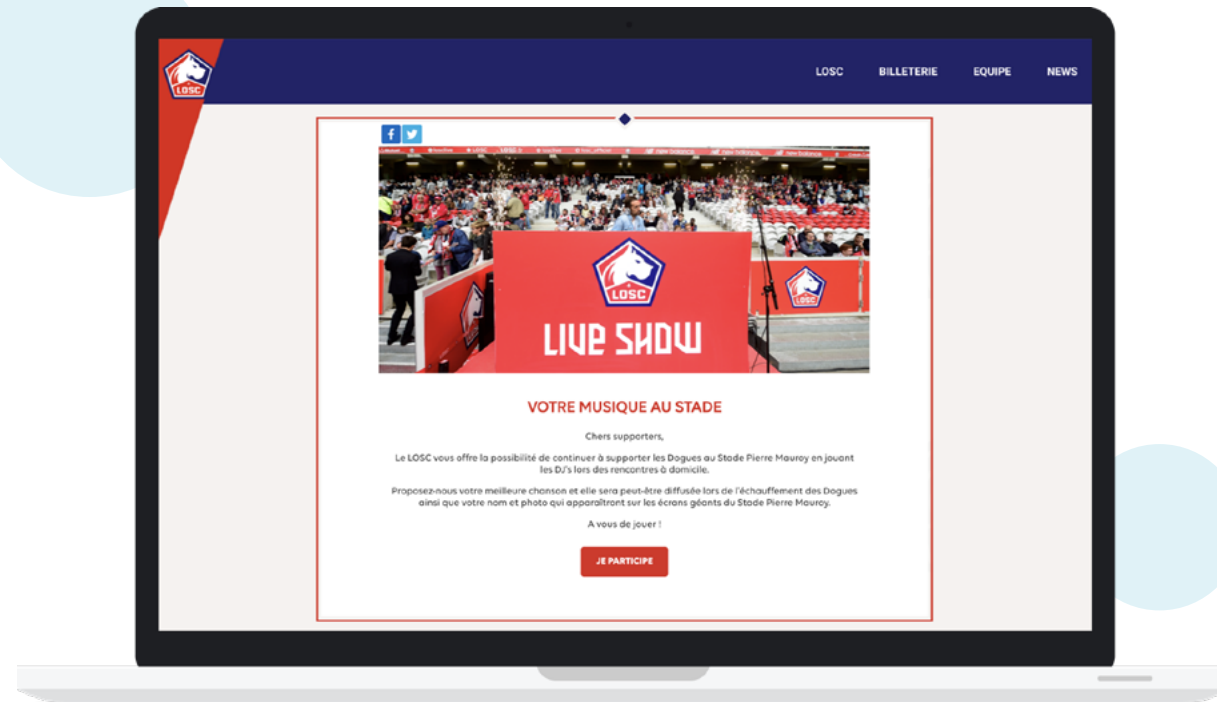
Fragmentation is one of the challenges posed by new technologies, with fans using multiple devices to interact with their favourite sports. Gone are the days where you could only watch a game or a race on the television at the time of the game, or watch the highlight show at a fixed time or miss it forever! Nowadays there is an **increasingly wide range of options for watching sports**, from traditional broadcasters to online streaming services and platforms like Youtube. And **broadcasters are increasingly paying more attention to what fans want**, like **BT Sports** in the UK, who had the rights to the 2022 Champions League final and made the game free to view on Youtube, so not only restricting the game to paying viewers. The fragmentation of viewing channels means that **social media's share of sponsorship value is rocketing**, with the **NBA expecting the 50-50%** threshold between TV and social media viewing to be reached during the 2023-2024 season.



A side effect of this fragmentation in viewing habits is a concerning shift taking place in fan behaviour towards digital viewing, especially in younger generations, so moving away from the traditional broadcast channels. And this means that **the way in which fans are consuming sports and the types of content they're consuming are changing**. Highlights are for example becoming increasingly popular, as well as short content pieces that are shared and reshared on Twitter and TikTok, without forgetting VOD formats and **user generated content** like new chant competitions or a photo contest to decide who wears the new home kit the best.

Fan content creation is a new vector for content consumption, so this type of interactive campaigns should be encouraged and widely used by sports clubs.

Take the example of French football team, **LOSC**, who asked their fans to submit their favourite songs in order to create the playlist that is blasted out to the stadium during the warm-up before kick off.

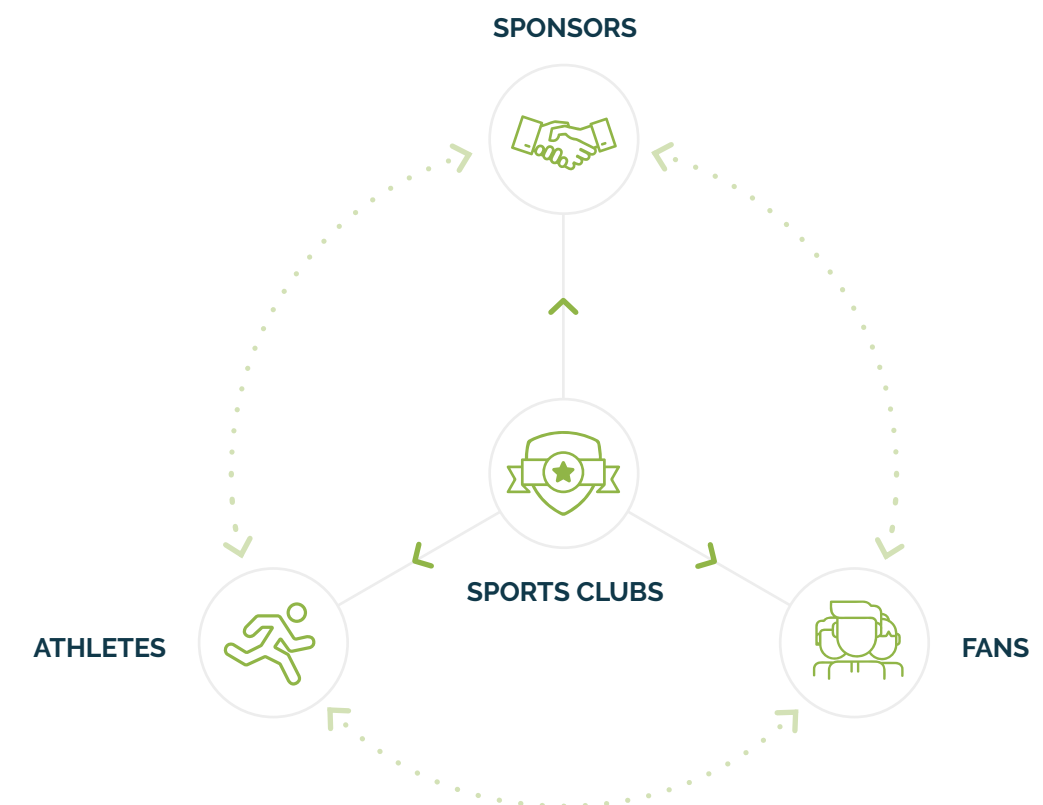


The industry is also seeing a **rise of non-live content** (highlights, goal recaps, interviews, behind the scenes footage, ...) with a proliferation of platforms, such as TikTok and Twitch, that have sparked an **increase in the consumption of and interest in additional sports content**. These formats present a whole host of new opportunities and highlight the **importance of creating a wide range of sports-related content, especially for younger generations**.

#2 Generating revenue both from fans and sponsors

In an ideal world, the sports industry would be fueled by the pure passion and enjoyment for sports, but we live in the real world and we all know that it actually all comes down to money. **The New York Times** estimates that the industry is worth \$160 billion worldwide so the financial implications and weight of the industry are considerable.

As pointed out by the **Johan Cruyff Institute**, there has long been a debate about who the main protagonist is in the sports ecosystem. Is it the clubs, the fans, or the athletes? The debate remains open but one thing is clear: **without fans, professional sports are meaningless**. Making the case for sports organisations to have marketing strategies in place that are based on fan engagement and that give meaning to the connection between them, the athletes, the sponsors and the fans.



So **clubs need to create a brand that transcends the sport and they need to engage with their fans first to create a community**, before generating revenue from them. It is important to not call fans 'customers' or 'consumers', they need to be treated as valuable guests who are interacting with a brand.

Read our media e-book to find out how major European media groups have increased their advertising revenue by using interactive campaigns.



Download the ebook

There are 3 traditional pillars for revenue in sports:



BROADCAST RIGHTS



MATCHDAY EARNINGS



SPONSORSHIP VALUE

All three of these pillars are being put under considerable pressure in an increasingly digitised world, so it is **key for sports organisations to always be finding new sources of revenue**. A lot of clubs believe that by having a large social media presence with lots of followers and likes, they are super digital and engaged. But this isn't true, the benefits and value is actually being reaped by the social media networks, and not the fans or the clubs.

Find out how major European clubs have included their sponsors in their interactive marketing strategies:



Discover how games can be a powerful tool for recruiting new supporters

Read now



How Clermont Foot 63 use Qualifio to engage and retain their fanbase

Read now



How Valencia CF use Qualifio to grow, get to know, monetise and engage their community

Read now

In the case of football, and especially big European clubs, **fan bases are often spread worldwide**, think of clubs like Liverpool, Manchester United or Real Madrid who have massive audiences in Asia and America for example. It is **key for clubs to build meaningful relationships with these global audiences** as they have the potential to generate more money from sponsors, who are always keen to reach large scale audiences. Hence the **need for digital fan engagement solutions that sponsors can get on board with**.

Digital engagement with fans will be key for the future of sport clubs, as they shift towards a more **media-focused model where fan engagement can be monetized**. The hole-in-one will be finding a way to **drive fan engagement and create sponsor value from it in a non-intrusive and meaningful way**.

When discussing digital engagement from European football clubs, 2 are usually mentioned as leaders: **Manchester United** and Barcelona FC. The British club Manchester United are often given as an example when it comes to their digital engagement: they have over 659 million social media followers and an average of 80 million online interactions every day. Chief executive Ed Woodward has in recent years focused on encouraging commercial revenue from the club's online audience.

Before being able to generate any revenue from fans, clubs need to understand them first, in order to give them the content and experiences they're expecting. When interviewed recently, former Barcelona FC board member **Didac Lee** said



"Content should be the new core business of clubs"

The revenue currently being generated from fans is tiny compared to the potential revenue. So just like consumer brands do with their audiences, **sports clubs and organisations need to be collecting first-party and zero-party data from their fan base** in order to understand them by analysing their wants and needs. They need to be building a community because sponsors will always view a connected and engaged fan base favourably. Brands that are willing to invest in sports and in sponsorship deals want to work with organisations that can effectively reach their audience, so **having a solid direct-to-fan marketing and merchandising strategy in place and being really good at reaching your audience will increase your value in terms of sponsorship revenue**.

There is an argument that says that aren't fans already paying enough for tickets, shirts, TV subscriptions? Should clubs really be asking for more? Well not every fan is willing to

spend money on their favourite clubs but **there is a significant proportion of the fan base that are on the lookout for opportunities to do so**. But if clubs aren't in touch with their fans and don't actually know what they really want, then they're missing out on revenue opportunities. **The key is making fans feel like part of a community**, and not considering them as a revenue stream, but as people that are connected to you.

#3 360° fan engagement

By the very nature of its activities, the sports industry has always had **close ties to the offline world**, with sporting events, both professional and amateur, pulling in crowds of hundreds of thousands on a regular basis and long before most of us can even remember. But **recent progress in digital technology has profoundly changed the industry**, allowing organisations to get closer to the fans that don't attend live events. And while most sports are still taking place in the real world, although that also looks like it will be changing in the coming years, many aspects of the industry have gone through or are going through a major digital transformation.


The sports industry is **fundamentally an industry based on engagement and community**, and the people who get involved with sports, whether on a local amateur level or at a higher level, are passionate about it. You only need to consider the mind-boggling number of fans who attend games and matches weekly around the world, or the breathtaking number of people who **watch large-scale sporting events** like the Olympics, the World Cup or the Super Bowl on television or online, to realise just how passionate and involved we all are!




So what exactly is fan engagement? **Rui Biscaia**, Senior Lecturer at the University of Bath, renowned for their sports departments, explains that fan engagement is so much more than likes and retweets on social media and defines it as:

"the fans' voluntary interactions with the team, either online or offline, that create value and imply having an emotional connection to the team."

Rui further explains that fan engagement will often lead to 2 types of behaviour:

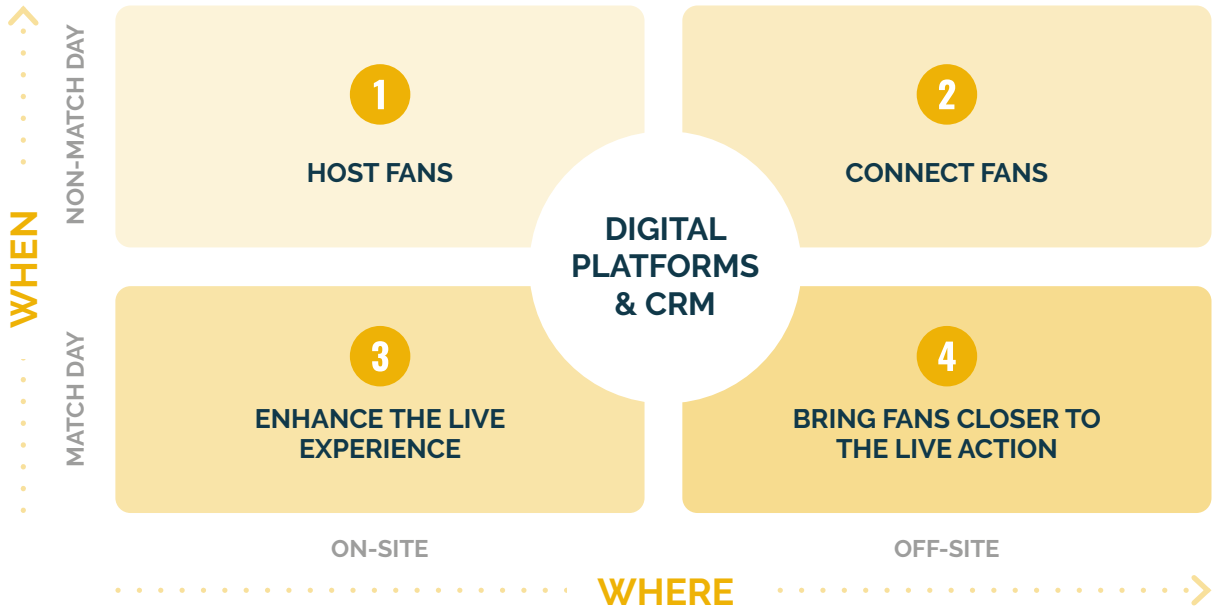
- 

TRANSACTIONAL:
a **direct exchange** of money, time and effort
- 


NON-TRANSACTIONAL:
activities that add value to the team but are not directly related to consumption


The concept of fan engagement was born in the 1990s in North America and has slowly made its way across the Atlantic, with social media and the rise of digital technology since the early 2000s being the main drivers. **Clubs are now connected to their fans 24/7**, with a multitude of contact points and communication channels, and regardless of where they are in the world.


Sports marketers and consultants, **Fowler and Wilson** devised a matrix that considers **fan engagement from 4 angles**, to be managed on- and off-site, and both on match and non-match days. **Every touchpoint in the matrix is an opportunity to collect key data** and shows that fan engagement is so much more than just social media. Maintaining engagement with fans is critical to making the most of commercial opportunities within any digital asset. Understanding the importance of building meaningful digital relationships with their fans, and that they need to be engaging and responding to the needs of fans both on and off the pitch and on both match and non-match days, is key for all actors in the sports industry.




Here are **some great examples of sporting organisations** listening to their fans and providing them with what they're asking for and giving them more value and more personalised experiences:

- 

Italian football club AS Roma launched their new website based on suggestions from their fans, making it more likely for them to see increased engagement .
- 

Manchester City's Etihad stadium is equipped with free high-speed internet to allow fans to interact with the club's social media channels during games.
- 

The Tour de France now provides fans with up-to-date statistics and insights throughout the races, allowing fans to get a better understanding of what's happening.
- 

Many clubs and organisations (English Cricket Board, West Ham United, Real Madrid, ...) have launched fan apps that provide fans with a wide range of digital content and commercial outlets.

Tips for better fan engagement:

- Make digital experiences shareable
- Listen to fan feedback
- Acknowledge, thank and reward fans
- Get sponsors involved
- Apply the same strategies as consumer brands, by tailoring content and commercial offers based on the data collected
- Don't neglect social media but don't make it the be all and end all

In their **digital transformation report**, the GSIC (Global Sports Innovation Center, powered by Microsoft) designated **fan engagement as one of the key areas that sports organisations need to focus on between now and 2025**, and the importance of fan engagement was given an average score of 6/7 in their survey. The GSIC's main objective is to connect innovation to the sports industry in order to improve its value chain, and they concluded that digital transformation is a key component of the sports industry nowadays and in the years to come, with fan engagement being the main benefactor.



Fan engagement remains **one of the industry's greatest challenges**, especially in younger generations, who typically have shorter attention spans and rising expectations of the personalised and unique experiences they expect from their favourite club.

The big leaps forward that have been made in terms of digital technology innovation in recent years can help to explain why fan engagement is such an important topic for all actors in the sports industry. **Nielsen Sports'** main recommendation for clubs when it comes to keeping up and improving their fan engagement is to remain nimble and flexible in a fragmented environment.

#4 Audience understanding and facing the cookieless future

Sport is all about head and heart, right? The passion of the fans, the plotting on the last day of the season of whether your favourite team needs a win or a draw and what will happen if your rivals win, the chants filling the stadium when your team scores, ... There's nothing quite like it! But another crucial element in sports is increasingly having a wide-ranging effect on the industry: data, and more specifically **first-party and zero-party data**. And not only on the pitch, where scoring averages and mileage are analysed with health scores and other highly detailed statistics. **Data is also having a significant impact off the pitch**, as it is enhancing the industry and allowing leagues and federations to attract more fans. **The value of data off the pitch is finally being recognised** as it is allowing organisations to manage the interactions they're having with their fans in order to better understand their preferences and behaviours. By improving fan engagement, clubs can get to know their fans better, thus improving their experience. And **an improved fan experience can mean big business** outcomes and opportunities. But most European leagues and teams are still rookies when it comes to tackling data and managing their relationships with their fanbase.

The importance of collecting and harnessing the power of fan data takes on a whole other level in the current digital climate where **third-party cookies**, long relied on to gain

audience insights, are being phased out by the big digital bodies, leaving a gaping hole in the marketing strategies of many organisations. One of the frontrunners in the race to fill this black hole of data is **first-party and zero-party data** collection strategies, that Forrester defines as

"data that a customer intentionally and proactively shares with a company."

The outstanding progress that has been made in mobile technology in recent years, has opened up a host of new opportunities for clubs interacting with their fans, and most importantly a goldmine of data.

When considering the impact of data off the field, or off the track in this case, **Forbes** gives the example of Formula 1 team Aston Martin. They have also taken the fan data plunge in an **attempt to target and nurture a more diverse fanbase**, ranging from the avid racing fans who attend the races to the high-net-worth individuals who buy their iconic cars. Motorsports are facing a particularly tough challenge compared to other sports, as the opportunities for fans to engage with the sport are limited. It's easy to kick a ball around the park with your friends on a Sunday morning or to run round your local athletics track, but not so easy to race round your local streets in a racing car! Aston Martin are therefore hoping to **use the data they collect from their fans to create custom experiences that are tailored to individual interests**. So for example, a possible experience for long-term fans of the brand, and another for the avid Sebastian Vettel fans.



Fans have constantly evolving needs as the technology and digital tools they're surrounded by progress, so **providing them with a personalised experience that meets their needs and expectations has to be a top priority for all actors in the industry**. And gathering their data and using it strategically will enable clubs to anticipate these needs and tailor the fan experience they offer. The key priority when collecting data from fans should be **using it to improve the productivity of their business and the efficiency of their organisation**. Harnessing the power of the data collected will also enable sports clubs to **understand what it is their fans want and what they're expecting**, thus helping them to better target their messaging and to be agile and flexible when dealing with evolving needs.

One trend in the sports industry is that **football clubs are increasingly acting like consumer brands in their approach to collecting data**. Some have even taken this attitude as far as adopting **Disney's model** of reserving blockbuster content for their streaming services, rather than releasing it in cinemas and on traditional broadcast channels, where they typically cannot collect data from their audience. This model allows them to bypass the middleman and sell content directly to their fans, collecting their precious **first-party and zero-party data** in the process.

By copying this model, actors in the sports industry will **gain key information about their audience**, allowing them to adapt their messaging and how they engage with them based on their needs and preferences. Take the Spanish football club Barcelon FC for example, they have a huge worldwide audience and they know that **97% of their fanbase will most likely never attend a home game at Nou Camp**, as they live abroad. So armed with this knowledge, they are able to create marketing and sporting offers and content for these fans that match their expectations. Clubs and sports organisations are increasingly turning to technology partners to support their growth and strategy. All-in-one solutions such as **Sports Alliance** can provide them with innovative modules that can manage and pilot all aspects of running sports clubs and federations, from marketing and communication, to ticket sales, sponsorship deals and match-day logistics. Agencies like **Origins Digital** offer cutting-edge digital solutions that allow clubs to deliver the best in sports digital experience. From OTT solutions to websites and dedicated apps. Both these types of solutions can help sporting bodies to achieve their goals: raise awareness of their sport/club worldwide, grow their fan engagement and provide an overall better experience for fans watching sport.

Sports Alliance



A key part of understanding their audience is going to lie with the younger generation. You've certainly heard of **Gen Z**, the generation born between 1997 and 2012 who are puzzling many industries the world over with their new views and attitudes towards consumption and consumer habits. They're the first generation to have grown up surrounded by the digital world. They succeed the Millennials and precede Generation Alpha and certainly won't remember France winning the World Cup in '98, they were barely born! So when it comes to their consumption of sports, they make no exception and **they're making new headway and shaking things up with what they expect** and are willing to watch and take part in.

The key takeaway for actors in the sports industry looking to increase their knowledge of their audience and have the necessary tools in hand to face the cookieless world, is that they need to identify and maintain a dedicated first- and zero-party data strategy. With a defined and robust first- and zero-party data strategy in place, sports properties and media owners will have the foundation they need to make **authentic and long-lasting relationships with their audience**, by delivering timely, personalised and nuanced messaging and content. Delivering interactivity for fans while they're consuming content is going to become increasingly important and will produce new datasets that are crucial to fan engagement strategies.



identify and maintain
a dedicated first- and zero-party data strategy

Here are some tips for facing the cookieless world:



Find the **right balance between privacy and personalisation**: 91% of consumers prefer a personalised experience but aren't keen on their data being processed and used so sports organisations need to rethink how they capture their fans' data and how they're using it.



First- and zero-party data is the future: they're more consumer-friendly and relevant to your business.



Use **gamification and interactive marketing**: trigger and action from your fans with a challenge and reward this behaviour.

#5 Keep fans retained and returning

Picture this: you're standing in a half-empty stadium watching a rugby match in the depths of winter in January in the north of Europe. It's lashing down with rain and the temperature is hovering somewhere below freezing. You're soaked and can't feel your toes. It's a cracking game and your team won, but it sounds a bit grim, doesn't it? So it makes sense that you'd rather be at home watching the game from the sofa with a warm drink, or in a pub with your mates and a pint, right?

Well this is precisely one of the major challenges facing sports federations and organisations in the next few years: **how to keep fans returning to stadiums to watch live sport**, given that it is so easy and readily available to watch from the comfort of your own home. Clubs are going to have to work extra hard to keep their fans engaged and coming back to stadiums and venues.

Another aspect of this challenge is a somewhat unexpected new form of competition: **the competition for eyeballs**. The industry is increasingly facing stiff competition from the entertainment industry when it comes to grabbing the consumer's time and attention. Think back 10-15 years, most countries only had access to a handful of TV channels so if you were watching France and Ireland battling it out in the Six Nations on a Saturday afternoon, you weren't torn between watching that or the latest Marvel blockbuster on your favourite streaming service. But today there is so much choice available to viewers and fans, not only could you be watching a movie instead of the Six Nations, you could also be watching the Dubai Open or the Chicago Bulls take on the Knicks.

And **fans are increasingly asking for more than just the game**, they want exclusive and engaging experiences on top of the excitement and passion of watching a game. **Forbes** took a look at the example of the FA, the English Football Association, who trialled innovative engagement platforms to counter the effects of audience decreases during the COVID-19 pandemic. And the results speak for themselves: an initiative launched to encourage young girls to start playing football resulted in 60.000 new participants.

The GSIC pointed out **in their report** that **technology is reshaping the sports industry's future** and there is an increasing tendency to **redefine live sporting events as entertainment**, with a new term even being coined "sportainment". This means that clubs, organisations, federations and associations worldwide will have to **work hard to keep up with the advances made thanks to technology** or run the risk of lagging behind and losing out on growth and revenue opportunities.

So clubs can also **boost the engagement of their fans by tailoring the experiences they offer to the individual interests** of their fanbase and providing them with engaging experiences. Automatic **loyalty** of fans based on their passion for a club shouldn't be taken for granted. **Their loyalty is based on an emotional connection, not a commercial one**. So clubs need to remember the value of engaging with their fans, and shouldn't be blindsided by their loyalty and potential revenue at the expense of a meaningful relationship with their fans.

#6 Lessons from the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had a wide-ranging impact on all aspects of our lives in 2020 and 2021, and also had a **long-lasting effect on the sports industry**. Competitions were stopped, stadiums were empty and all sports worldwide came to a grinding halt. Not only did this have serious sporting consequences, with large-scale competitions like the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the UEFA European Football Championship, the French Open and Wimbledon to name but a few being postponed, but **the financial impact was also immense**. No games meant no ticket or merchandise sales, and reduced media payments.

It is estimated that the postponement of the Premier League and La Liga games at the start of the pandemic in 2020, cost:



Manchester United upwards of
£20 million



Real Madrid in excess of
€32 million
in matchday earnings only

The Madrid club would normally rake in 4 million € for a single game and they generated a total of 751 million € in 2019 (140 million € from ticket sales and 250 million € in broadcasting revenue). And that's without counting the losses in terms of their prolific stadium tours and merchandise sales due to the stadium and shop being closed. Besides the financial losses, their biggest problem was the **lack of content due to matches being cancelled**.

Let's take a closer look at how these 2 big European football clubs dealt with the pandemic:



MANCHESTER UNITED

1

They found **alternative visibility for their sponsors**, as explained by Richard Arnold, Director: *“Commercial success is only possible because of the unparalleled engagement we have with our fans. The end goal is creating a virtuous circle, where more engagement with our fans equals greater opportunities for our partners.”*

2

77% of their audience are millennials so they **focused on the quality of the content** they were publishing on their multiple communication channels: several posts a day on social media, podcast episodes, videos on YouTube, updates on their app, ...

3

They looked to **esports** for alternative digital engagement opportunities.

4

They understood that it's all about the fans and the club has done a great job **creating a meaningful bond with their fans**, planning plenty of activities where they talk about their fans and the community they're all part of.



REAL MADRID

1

They launched **clever digital initiatives based on user-generated content** by asking their fans to be journalists for a day and getting their players to answer these questions in short videos. They reported huge peaks on their social channels with this campaign.

2

They used the **nostalgia surrounding the club's success** by publishing throwbacks in their content, making the most of their rich history.

3

They established an **excellent distribution strategy** that centred around small bite size pieces of content, perfect for social media interactions.

4

They made sure the **conversation was kept alive** by having actual conversations with their fans.

So despite all the doom and gloom, there are **positive lessons that are being taken from the pandemic**. With fans being stuck at home and no sporting events being organised, clubs were forced to question how they were engaging with their fans and to consider new and alternative ways of doing things. An increasing number of federations and leagues have since been encouraging and helping their clubs on their digital transformation journey.

Another **great example** of this comes from the FFE (Fédération Française d'Escrime) who saw their numbers drop by 24% in 2020. They have set up a scheme to accompany and help all of the French fencing clubs to get back on track, not only with **financial help and also with advice and logistical support**. They've placed the focus on reactivity and flexibility, with projects such as webinars and workshops about digital development, marketing, attracting new members and much more. UEFA have also placed innovation at the heart of their 2019-2024 development plan.

Fan engagement also saw a significant increase during the pandemic, with clubs understanding the need to keep in touch with them and offer them some relief and entertainment during what were difficult times for everyone. As explained by Alex Ferrer Kristjansson, Senior Director Marketing and Communication Euroleague Basketball (Europe's elite multinational basketball club competition league):

"We concentrated on providing fans with engaging content and initiatives that would keep them connected with the league and with the clubs. In normal times, our communication and marketing are based on live games so we obviously had to adapt and find new ways of telling stories".

The **rise and increasing popularity of esports** is also a positive development to have emerged from the pandemic. This new discipline was one of the ways that clubs found to keep in touch with their fans whilst all competitions were on hold, and the industry is now booming, with an **increasingly wide array of sponsors and investors willing to get involved**, and not just the brands that are typically associated with the industry. The **Cannes Lions panel** expects global esports sponsorship to hit \$1 billion in 2022. And MasterCard is

a good example of a **consumer brand joining the esports game**, as they're hoping to reach an audience that is different from their traditional clientele. And this audience is growing at a rapid pace! It is estimated that **50% of esports fans** have started following in the past 2 years, and it's not only teenage boys who are joining the party, the female fanbase grew by 19% in the past year while the male fan base grew by 12%. During the pandemic, the Belgian Pro League created the 'Proximus ePro league e-Cup' and saw outstanding results with over 2000 fans signing up in the first hour, and over 3000 matches played.



This leads us neatly on to another big trend that has emerged in the past few years and that is overflowing with potential and opportunities: women's sport, with football and cricket being the forerunners. TV coverage and viewership are rising steadily and sponsorship interest and budgets are expected to follow. The WSL are expecting their viewing numbers for the season 2021-2022 to have risen by 500%!

So the pandemic is (hopefully) over but the emphasis on fan engagement via digital technology is here to stay and won't be disappearing anytime soon! The pandemic meant that clubs and organisations realised the importance and benefits of having a good digital fan experience and have encouraged many to accelerate their digital roadmap.

#3 Hall of fame of Qualifio customer cases



Valencia CF

Spanish La Liga football club Valencia CF have a rich history with many titles and trophies, they started using Qualifio for their data collection and fan engagement strategies. They had 4 main objectives:



Grow their database with new newsletter subscribers.



Get to know their supporters better by collecting valuable insights and feedback from them.



Increase their sponsors' visibility by adding interactive formats to their offering.



Engage their fans with fun and interactive content.

Read their success story and discover how they used Qualifio's interactive formats to monetise and engage their fans, and not only on match days but on a recurring basis.

How to use Qualifio to grow, monetise and engage with a fan base

[Read now](#)



LOSC

LOSC, the northern French club who won the Ligue 1 in 2021, are also high achievers in terms of digital marketing and fan engagement. Fans of Qualifio since 2019, LOSC made huge use of it during the pandemic as they relied heavily on their online presence and fan interactions, when they got their fans involved by showing their support to the team.

They have 3 main objectives when using Qualifio:



Engage with their fans.



Encourage the sense of community between fans and reinforce the feeling of belonging to the club.



Recruit new supporters and increase their newsletter opt-ins.

Take a look at how they used key events throughout the year as well as match and non-match day content to achieve these goals.

How games can be powerful tools for recruiting new supporters

[Read now](#)

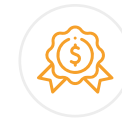


Clermont Foot 63

The Clermont Foot 63, which will be competing in Ligue 2 next season, face a range of new opportunities as well as major challenges with one of their primary goals being to boost engagement and retention of their fans. To stand out and keep their fans loyal throughout the year, Clermont Foot 63 have chosen an approach based on enhancing customer relations, supported by a strategic use of the Qualifio platform to:



Engage their fans and expand their database through interactivity



Foster fan loyalty through an app and a reward program



Deliver an optimal user experience

Read how Clermont Foot 63 use Qualifio to engage and retain their fanbase.

How sports clubs use Qualifio to engage and retain their fanbase

[Read now](#)

#4 Team strategy: top 7 interactive formats and best practices from top teams

Qualifio has more than **50 interactive marketing formats** to offer, with many of them giving you an open goal for **fan engagement**, **first-party** and **zero-party data collection**, **sponsor visibility** and **sales activation**. Here's a round-up of the top 10 formats that will help you to achieve your off-the-pitch marketing goals, and best practices from some of the top European clubs and organisations.



User generated content such as **photo** and **video** contests: pass the ball to your audience and let them send you their most original photos and videos. This highly flexible format will allow you to let your imagination run wild and your fans' even wilder! Whether they're uploading photos of the best tifos, videos with the best chants, their kit purchase tickets or drawings from your youngest fans, it's the perfect fan engagement tool!

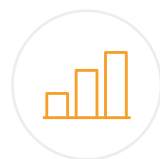


Advent calendars: it's the most wonderful time of the year! So make the most of this month-long format that will allow you to engage with your fans and reward them in the build up to Christmas! This format is also a great way to get your sponsors involved!

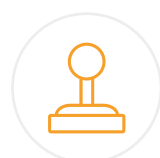


Quizzes, swipers and **personality tests**: challenge your fans and put their knowledge of their favourite club or sport to the test! Do they know all the results from the past season? How good is their memory of glorious past players? Which player or athlete are they most like? Get them involved and reward them with these engaging formats!

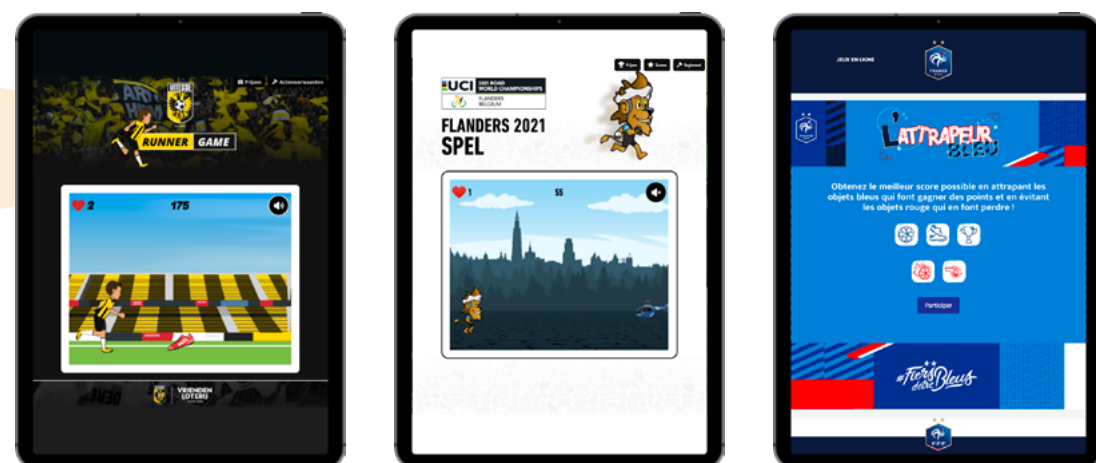




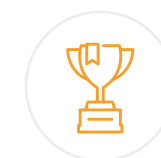
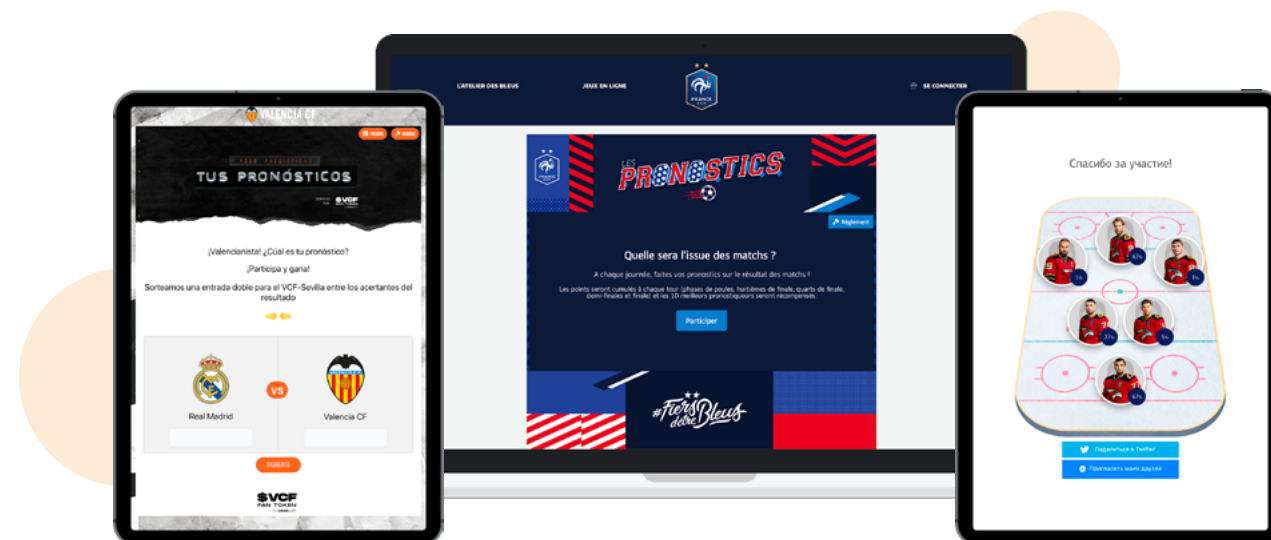
Polls and votes: what was the best goal scored this season? Or which is the best home shirt ever? Don't leave these questions unanswered and ask your fans for their opinions! How about getting your fans who are watching the race on television to answer a live poll to find out how they feel about the race and who their favourites are? These are all possible with poll and vote formats, and they're a great way of engaging your fans, showing that you're listening to them and collecting their first- and zero-party data.



Arcade games such as **runner** or **catcher** games: these highly entertaining and engaging formats are perfect for challenging your fans! Who can ride to the finish line the quickest whilst avoiding the cobbles, the press motorbikes and the flying bottles? Or who can collect the most balls, home shirts and football boots whilst avoiding the red cards and injuries?



Predictions, battles and team selectors: show your fans that their opinions count by asking them to predict the outcome of the season, or of the next match. The head coach will know who he's lining up for the big match on Saturday, but what do your fans think? Perfect for gathering valuable insights into what your fans are thinking, these formats are really flexible and easy to set up!



Skill and instant win games, like the **shell game**, the **wheel of fortune** and the **jackpot**: make your fans the lucky winners of an interactive wheel of fortune or jackpot that you can adapt to incorporate any theme or activity you need! This fun and easy format will entertain and reward your fans, and will also give your sponsors some great visibility!





#5 How Qualifio can help

Qualifio has been working with some of Europe's top sports organisations and clubs for over a decade, and has **helped them to face some of their biggest challenges**:



Bringing **more interactivity and virality to their content**, both on match days and non-match days.



Getting to know their fan base better and segmenting their database.



Finding **new revenue streams** by offering new and innovative formats to their sponsors, across all their channels.



Increasing their engagement with their fans and **building more meaningful relationships** with them.

In the past ten years, we've seen so many highly innovative and creative ways that actors from the sports industry have used our **interactive formats**, to achieve a wide range of their marketing goals. Some have wanted to **spice up their matchday content** by adding polls and votes about the day's sporting event; others have wanted to **entertain and engage** with their fans in new and innovative ways, with competitions and quizzes with amazing prizes to be won; some have wanted to **increase their social media following** with games and user generated content; and others have wanted to **increase their number of newsletter opt-ins**, with forms and personalised messaging. And of course we can't forget those who have **increased their sponsorship revenues** by teaming up with advertisers to create awareness and opt-ins for them with all sorts of interactive formats. You can read about more of these [inspiring examples here](#).

One of the other advantages of using Qualifio is that our modules can **save you a huge amount of time and money**. With our turnkey solutions, that require little to no development or coding knowledge, you can **easily and quickly set up campaigns without needing a whole team of people on it**. Your marketing team can put together a great campaign in a matter of minutes, with over 50 formats to choose from, and include it in their content. Meanwhile, your data team can oversee and manage the **first-party and zero-party data** you're collecting and leverage it to make sure you're providing your fans with the best possible experience. No data silos either as Qualifio can be **integrated with all the marketing tools** you're already using.

Taking fan retention one step further with reward programs

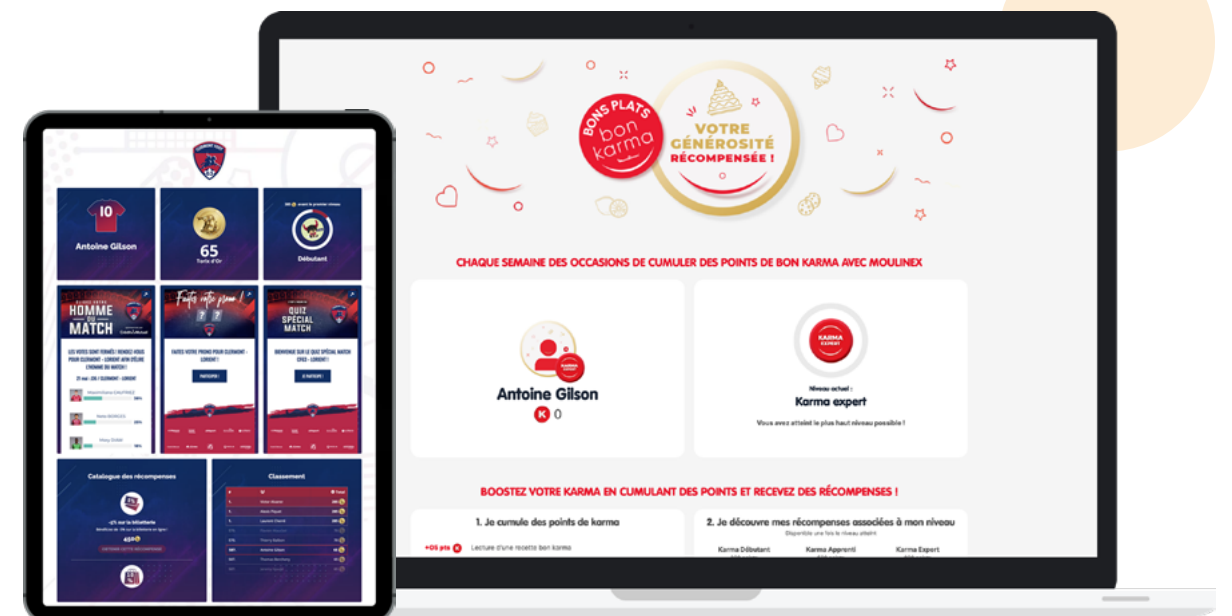
Something key to keep in mind when considering the use of interactive content to engage and get to know fans better, is that **the conversion funnel is never-ending**. Once you've implemented your marketing strategies to retain your fans, boost your fan numbers, engage with them online, and get to know them better, **remember to keep going!** Don't suddenly stop engaging with your most loyal fans or with fans who have shown interest but haven't been monetised, or you'll run the risk of losing their interest, and they may seek sports content elsewhere where they feel better valued.

A great way of keeping up your engagement with fans is through **reward programs**. We've designed the possibility of creating reward programs with Qualifio after conversations

with some of our biggest customers, as we were trying to understand what they were still missing in their data collection and audience engagement journeys. We took all our learnings from these conversations and poured them into a solution that allows you **to set up creative and engaging reward programs, designed to reward your audience for all interactions with you, not just their purchases**. You'll also be able to reward your audience for returning, either to your shop or stadium, by making their recurrent visits a rewardable event.

The concept of rewards has been evolving quickly over the past few years as **consumer demands and expectations change**, and we believe that the way forward is to create reward programs that recognise more than just a purchase relationship. You can start rewarding your fans from their very first interaction with you, and begin building your relationship with them from there, increasing your chances of there being a purchase along their journey. With this approach, we're giving full autonomy back to sports clubs and their marketers, allowing them to start their reward programs on a small scale and to get their programs online quickly, with minimal development time and effort.

Reward programs can also be easily plugged into our interactive formats, take a look at a couple of programs we set up to test it out. This means that your engagement and data collection efforts with interactive campaigns are rewarded as you set up programs your fans will enjoy and interact with. Ultimately, your reward programs will allow you **to retain fans and ensure you're continuously building more meaningful relationships with them**.



Interested in finding out more
about our tools?

[Request a demo](#)

Want to read more about how our
customers are using our modules
to create amazing campaigns?

[Check out our blog!](#)



How Valencia CF use Qualifio to
grow, get to know, monetise and
engage their community

[Read now](#)



Discover how games can be a
powerful tool for recruiting new
supporters

[Read now](#)

[Check other success stories](#)