

M&C SAATCHI
SPORT & ENTERTAINMENT
The Passions Agency

ISSUE 22

FANCOM

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TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES



LAURA COLLER
CEO, LONDON

FAN·DOM

/fan:dom/ noun

A mass homogenous group following a single attitude

FAN·COM

/fan:com/ noun

Coalescing communities with intersectional passions and behaviours

In January '24, M&C Saatchi Sport and Entertainment unleashed our Fancom philosophy to the world as a fresh framework for thinking about people and their passions.

At the heart of Fancom is the belief that people can't be defined solely by a single fandom- their tastes, perspectives and behaviours are far greater, richer, and more diverse. The magic dust lies in weaving ourselves into this complex fabric of people's intersecting cultural preferences. A nuanced view of people and their passions is a more truthful one but demands that we are more interrogative in our assumptions, in our research, in our planning. We believe it's worth it.

But if connecting to people who cluster in communities is too granular, engaging in mass cultural moments might be your answer. Because these macro moments are now a hotbed of converging passions; whether it's the beauty world finding its place at the Super Bowl, Labrum's recent show at the Arsenal stadium, or even the role of politics at Glastonbury.

This summer, dubbed 'The Summer of Sport', was really far more than that. It's been a period of the highest density of cultural moments in a short space of time that we've all united around. What's starkly clear is that being around others- friends and strangers alike- and feeling a sense of togetherness has been the antidote none of us realised we needed, and has enhanced our experiences, and memories, of these major moments in time.

We've been lucky enough to be at the heart of many of these moments.

Amplifying Barclays' sponsorship of Wimbledon with our 'Here for Wimbledon' campaign was all about celebrating the team behind the greatest tennis tournament in the world. From umpires to ball boys to groundsmen, when we come together anything is possible.

Our work for UEFA saw us create a language tool, EUROLingo, which was designed to bring the fans of all nations together to learn each-other's footballing vernacular throughout the tournament, celebrating the international language of football to an audience of over 191M.



For adidas' 'You Got This' campaign- a rally cry to get the nation behind our boys while humanising them through the lens of shared pressures- we shot Trent Alexander-Arnold, Declan Rice and Scott McTominay for social-first and epic OOH spots that drew fans into those high-octane moments.

On to the Olympics, we worked with the IOC to shine a spotlight on their Refugee team by creating the first-ever Refugee Olympic Team pin which was worn and traded by fans at Paris 2024, promoting unity and support for the 36 inspirational athletes who represent over 100 million displaced people worldwide.

For Dreams, it was all about the sport of sleep as we gave Team GB athletes a space to come together, relax and revitalise- no cardboard in sight- harnessing the power of sleep to supercharge performance.

With Old El Paso we inspired the nation to 'Make Some Noise for Your Home Team' celebrating moments of togetherness around the table, placing the brand at the heart of family time during the Games.

In July the Virgin Media Gamepad, our completely free and accessible space that brings gaming to London's premiere music venue, The O2, celebrated its second year and 100,000th gamer, proving that when you understand the cultural intersections of your audience you increase your chance of migrating people in and making meaningful connections.

For Jameson, we are fusing music scenes from across the globe to create a new and unique sound as part of our Jameson Distilled Sounds music platform, led by the imitable Anderson .Paak. By connecting artists together and bringing them into the Jameson family, we're giving the brand a pivotal role in genre experimentation with collaboration at its heart.

We fused fashion and women's rugby for O2. Why? Research told us 66% of 18-24-year-olds are developing an interest in sport thanks to fashion and online communities. So we created the first ever wearable data report together with England Rugby and the Women's Sport Trust, designed by Ellie Kildunne's 50:22 creative collective. The campaign drove fame for the Red Roses and connected them with new audiences while supporting O2's long-term mission to close rugby's gender awareness gap.

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We brought together a cultural icon with a new generation of artists for Absolut, giving five boundary-pushing young creatives the opportunity to complete the other half of a newly discovered Warhol piece, democratising the art space for a brand that's all about mixing and supporting those less represented.

Working with The LEGO Group's comms team on their pioneering collaboration with Pharrell Williams, a partnership with inclusivity at its heart, gave us the opportunity to inspire everyone to come together in unleashing their limitless creative potential through curiosity.

Toasting two of the world's most legendary Johns- Elton John and John Lennon- our second Ballantine's Stay True Icons collection paired iconic music with iconic whisky, celebrating those who are true to who they are with limited edition artist-inspired bottles.

Recent work for the PGA Tour saw us unite the world on a mission to discover why mysterious shield emblems were appearing across the globe. From fly posters across Tokyo's city centre and street stencils in Seoul, to a mural in Cape Town, a giant sand sculpture in Melbourne and a crop circle outside Montreal, 'The Shield Unites Us', is a unifying statement from the President's Cup's International team that we were proud to support.

And our latest work for the adidas Runners global social community sees run clubs becoming the new dating apps, whether you're finding 'the one' or just your running bestie, they are another way for people to find the connections they desire.

This summer has been Fancom in action. What ties all of these pieces of work together is not only the convergence of passion points, but a celebration of shared experiences; of togetherness by virtue of physical presence, a virtual moment or a common truth.

Across the following pages you'll find a collection of essays from our team providing insights, commentary and learnings from this epic summer of sport, entertainment and culture.

To bring home our theme of togetherness, we've invited our colleagues from around the globe to collaborate on this second issue. I really hope you enjoy the viewpoints from M&C Saatchi Sport & Entertainment in London, Amsterdam, North America, Sydney, Berlin and Johannesburg.



TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

Mood:
Togetherness



WHEN THOMAS BACH (PRESIDENT OF THE IOC), DELIVERED HIS SPEECH AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE PARIS OLYMPICS, IT WAS AN UNEXPECTEDLY EMOTIONAL MOMENT. "DURING ALL THIS TIME, YOU LIVED PEACEFULLY TOGETHER UNDER ONE ROOF IN THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE. YOU EMBRACED EACH OTHER. YOU RESPECTED EACH OTHER. EVEN IF YOUR COUNTRIES ARE DIVIDED BY WAR AND CONFLICT, YOU CREATED A CULTURE OF PEACE." THE SENTIMENT WAS CLEAR – THE WORLD DIDN'T KNOW HOW MUCH IT NEEDED THIS SPORTING MOMENT AS A DEVICE TO PROMOTE TOLERANCE, CONNECTION AND GLOBAL TOGETHERNESS.

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

It's a statement that has reverberated out from each major cultural moment this summer, with everyone from the organisers of We Out Here festival, to British Vogue on the Euros, to attendees of Notting Hill Carnival all saying the same thing, each in their own way.

Global pandemics, conflicts, loneliness epidemics, digital echo chambers, algorithmic radicalisation- if there's something that is coming to define our contemporary times, it's division. Togetherness isn't a fluffy word, it's the literal opposite to a sense of division, and it's something, whether we explicitly acknowledge it or not, that everyone has been crying out for.

This summer, the sport, entertainment and cultural sectors have shone in demonstrating how they have the power to create necessary moments of respite for people and, in spite of their context, to bring people together with others. To share something human and unifying- even if but fleeting and momentary. It's no wonder the World Economic Forum states that, "Sport and entertainment are powerful tools for social integration and inclusion".

For music and sports fans, their passions are a social lubricant. According to our Passion Pulse survey (2023), outside of consuming the passion itself, the most important way that people connect to their fandom is by experiencing it with others in real life (59%). People want to be surrounded by others who love what they love, whether they are lifelong devotees or newbies who have migrated in through the intersection of interests (looking at you Swifties at the Super Bowl!) because it's a shortcut to human connection. But it's more than that, it's the sense of crowd community, solidarity, cohesion; as Sports Business Journal consider, "game results are secondary- people

huddle around sports because a healthy collective consciousness keeps our heads up."

So in a time of division, what people really want is to feel a sense of connection, togetherness and community with others. Sport and entertainment can't fix the world's ills, mainstream brands can't be overtly political or engage in saviourism, but what's clear is that there are growing opportunities to show up in intersectional ways to enable more people to connect together and feel as one- even if just for a moment, an evening, a weekend. As Live Nation reports, 96% of fans agree that live music events create an opportunity for fans of different backgrounds to interact, and 80% of fans are more likely to attend a live music event if there is a diverse lineup.



So we've taken this theme of Togetherness to task. We asked all the brilliant minds and disciplines of our agency to call upon their stand-out cultural moments from this summer, those that have beautifully fused and blended fan communities, and bottle up the learnings around what it takes to create this sense of togetherness, to help you go forth and do the same, whatever the time of year, the experience, the

execution. What's clear from the articles, is that success or failure in this space lies in the effective handling of the cultural factors at the intersection of inclusion/exclusion. Aim to maximize the cultural factors that welcome people in (like combining passions to create multiple entry points; or creating a shared celebration), and minimize any aspect that would make people feel excluded or like they don't belong (like issues of gatekeeping or unintentional bias).

We hope our insights inspire your own campaigns or initiatives to foster a sense of greater togetherness for your people, tribe, fans or customers. As always, don't be a stranger, just give us a shout if you'd like any help with it.

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M&C SAATCHI
SPORT & ENTERTAINMENT
The Passion Project

MOMENTS OF TOGETHERNESS

IF YOU KNEW, YOU KNEW



Squash gatekeeping to ensure
cultural communities can flourish

By Joey Birch

Community Media Manager, London

2020 – 2023 saw a huge boom in the sneaker industry. Footwear brands struggled to keep up with the seemingly ever-growing demand for everything from classic retros to brand-new styles. Resale platforms like StockX began to populate bricks-and-mortar locations due to the commercial opportunity and as the footwear industry grew, so too did the cult around it. With sneaker drops becoming cultural moments, lotteries that were more about keeping people out of purchasing rather than enabling them to buy and a huge exchange of cash, which is now known across passion spaces as 'surge pricing'.

As the saying goes, "what goes up must come down." In 2024, the sneaker industry and the vast community it created seems to have dissipated, affecting not only the infamous resale outlets, but brands too. This summer we witnessed a certain popular sneaker brand's stock price plummet in an unprecedented way.

In response, rumours have emerged that the brand will stem this decline by re-releasing some of its most sought-after silhouettes from years gone by- many that have previously been unobtainable.

With reactions a mix of outrage and jubilation, the community has been utterly divided on the subject, taking to forums and comments sections to argue over whether these footwear relics should be kept in the past, owned by those lucky enough to have been part of the culture (or even alive!) at the time, or be re-released for the benefit of those who want the opportunity to own something they never thought possible.

At the heart of this debate is the matter of gatekeeping by individuals enforcing exclusivity on a culture/subculture in a, perhaps misguided, mission to 'protect' it. A hot topic that exists beyond sneakers, appearing in many forms across passion spaces. The question is- who has the right to make people feel like they do or don't belong? It definitely shouldn't be brands.

While the discourse around gatekeeping has been present within subcultures since their inception, there is now potentially a shift towards condemning, rather than celebrating, the instinct to protect. If you want a community to flourish, people should be welcomed with open arms, not discriminated against in the name of legacy or authenticity, whether that's in footwear, music, sport or beyond.

What we learn from the most robust communities, is that no matter the length of time you've spent within that community, or what items you own to reflect your belonging, you deserve a place to express your interest and share it with the likeminded people around you.

In the case of the sneaker industry, it's a shared passion with multi-generational, multi-genre appeal and a rich history. A place where we find true togetherness outside of what we have on our feet or how long we've had them. And that's more special than any limited-edition drop.

So if you find yourself running, moderating or encouraging your own community of fans or customers, make sure you're not on the wrong side of the gate. Commit to fostering a set of behaviours within your tribe that aspire to welcoming people in, not keeping them out. It's one of the core tenets we keep front and centre and it's why we believe the global communities we manage for our clients, such as the global adidas Runners community, are thriving.

"If you want a community to flourish, people should be welcomed with open arms, not discriminated against in the name of legacy or authenticity."

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

BY BUKOLA GARRY,
DIRECTOR, HEAD OF CULTURAL IMPACT, LONDON



FOR US BY US

With Us



TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

WHILE SOME REFER TO THE 'SUMMER OF SPORT', FOR ME IT WAS THE SUMMER OF SOUND. WITH THE LIKES OF DLT PRESENTS THE RECIPE, AMAFEST, RECESSLAND, CITY SPLASH AND EVERYDAY PEOPLE, THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT OF THE BLACK, POC AND QUEER COMMUNITY REMAINS STRONG. CURATING EVENTS FOR US, BY US JUST HITS A BIT DIFFERENT.

To be able to celebrate the sound of the diaspora, while seeing, hearing and communing with reflections of self, is truly something special.

A call and response of the community, these events are our platform to showcase the soundtracks of our lives, experiences, cultures and heritage. Deemed as 'niche' or 'minority' by those who sit outside of it, however the growth of Black, POC and Queer-owned festivals tells a different story. One of influence that is shaping the landscape of wider music culture and bringing the world together.

Genres such as Afrobeat, Amapiano and Dancehall were the lead sounds in some of this year's biggest hits, including Tems 'Love Me Je Je', Chris Brown 'Sensational', TitoM & Yuppe's 'Tshwala Bam' and Shenseea's 'Hit n Run'. We've seen mainstream festivals- the likes of Glastonbury- diversify line-ups to pull audiences that previously found themselves gatekept (literally and figuratively) and unsatisfied with an artist appearance on the undesirable location at the back of the field.

The ambition of a few was met with the desire of many and, together, we carved our own path. We created rich spaces (not risk spaces, that the limited imaginations of some choose to believe) that extend beyond the audiences they represent and attract the masses. Who doesn't crave safe spaces that radiate community, authenticity and a shared love for the two-step?

But, with the aftermath of Brexit, COVID and economic inflation in full effect, we've already seen over 50 UK festivals cancelled just this year alone (AIF), and it's the smaller, independent festivals that are being disproportionately impacted. To then add the layers of nuance and barriers of being 'minority-owned', we succumb to 'last in, first out' with investment being directed towards the tried and tested. So how can we, the communities and the brands that want to reflect them, ensure these events made for us, by us, survive and stand the test of time?

Put your money where your doubt is.

This is about reciprocity within the music festival ecosystem. Support communities and audiences by seeing them and backing them and you'll get that elusive brand love back in abundance. It's the acknowledgement, commitment and resourcing of those with deep pockets to work with us, waving that one-side discretion to maintain these diaspora-centric events that are far from niche, but a signal of the way forward in music culture.

Don't wait for June or October, the stages have literally been set - the time is now.



TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

IT'S TIME TO PASS THE BALL

WHY SPORT ORGANISATIONS NEED TO LET THE AUDIENCE PLAY

**CATHELIJNE NOORTMAN,
HEAD OF PR & COMMS,
AMSTERDAM**

**THE WAY BIG SPORTS
ORGANISATIONS
HANDLE MEDIA AND
BROADCASTING
RIGHTS TODAY IS
LIKE TRYING TO WIN
A MATCH WITH
OUTDATED TACTICS;
IT DOESN'T
SIMPLY WORK.**

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

For years, these rights have been cash cows, locked behind ironclad contracts that squeeze every penny out of traditional broadcasters. But in 2024, when Gen-Z are dictating how content is consumed, this approach is about as effective as a VHS tape in a streaming world.

Today's younger audiences, particularly Gen-Z, aren't watching sport the way previous generations did. Instead of sitting through entire matches, they're turning to TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for bite-sized clips, memes, and influencer content that distils the most exciting moments into snackable, shareable bites. For them, a 90-minute match is like a five-course meal they didn't order- they'd rather skip to the dessert. So, if sports organisations want to stay in the game, they need to rethink how they approach their media and broadcasting rights strategies.

The contradiction is glaring. On one hand, sports bodies say they want to reach younger audiences which is why they invest in influencer trips, invite digital creators to events and even launch social-first campaigns. But then these influencers are shackled by restrictive media rights that prevent them from capturing and sharing any of the content their audiences actually want to see highlights from the Field of Play (FOP), exclusive behind-the-scenes moments, or real-time reactions. What's the point of inviting them if we don't let them do what they do best?

It's not just frustrating for all, it's counterproductive. Take the Paris 2024 Olympics for example. With an expected global audience of over 3 billion people, the potential for digital content creators to amplify is staggering. But if they can't post the very clips and highlights that draw younger audiences in, how will the Olympics engage Gen-Z who are only going to scroll through highlights on their phones and won't sit through an entire marathon broadcast? In fact, a recent Deloitte report shows that 53% of Gen-Z prefer watching highlights over full events, and 73% say they follow influencers for their sports content.

And it's not just the Olympics. UEFA Euro 2024 faced the same problem, with media rights locked behind expensive, exclusive deals. Sure, those deals bring in big revenue now, but they risk alienating the very audience that will protect the future of the sport.

Gen-Z thrives on peer-driven, user-generated content. They trust influencers and digital creators more than traditional broadcasters, and they want to engage with sport in a way that feels personalised, fast-paced and on-demand. If sports organisations don't adapt to this shift, they're not just missing a trick; they're actively pushing away future fans.

The solution isn't complicated. Sports organisations need to embrace flexibility and loosen the reins on media rights, or even better, start collaborating. Instead of locking down content, they should actively encourage digital creators and influencers to share live moments, create mashups, and even host their own commentary streams. The NBA has already experimented with this, allowing influencers more freedom to use highlights and create tailored content for their followers and guess what? It's working. Their reach among younger audiences is skyrocketing.

If we want to keep sport culturally relevant, we need to make it accessible in the formats that today's audiences prefer. That means less gatekeeping and more collaboration whether you're an organisation, a broadcaster or a brand. After all, isn't the essence of sport to bring people together?

The ball's in their court and it's time to pass it; stop hogging it and start sharing it, because the game isn't just happening on the field anymore. It's happening on phones, on social platforms, and in the hands of creators who have the power to bring sport to life in ways we never imagined possible. So let's not shackle them, but let them play.

ONE TIER OF ACCESS
WILL CREATE A UNIFIED
SENSE OF EXPERIENCE

Level Playing Fields

BY ZARA WILSON,
SENIOR ACCOUNT
EXECUTIVE, LONDON

IN JULY THIS YEAR, EVENTS COMPANY DAYS LIKE THIS (DLT) TOOK A BREAK FROM THEIR LONDON DAY PARTIES AND FAMOUS MALTA 4-DAY FESTIVAL TO BRING A NEW EXPERIENCE UNKNOWN TO LONDON CULTURE- AN ALL-INCLUSIVE R&B FOOD FESTIVAL.

DLT's The Recipe was hosted in Gunnersbury Park, and featured a stellar line up of artists including Jazmine Sullivan, SiR, Alex Isley, Destin Conrad and many others, with DJ sets from London's most sought out selectas and not to mention all-inclusive food, drinks and attractions.

With over twenty-five food vendors curated by Black Eats London, multiple bars stationed across the festival and amusement rides, festival goers were spoilt for choice throughout the day.

Outside of the main acts and DJ sets, select brands offered multiple opportunities for enjoyment, for example ASOS hosted a beauty tent which offered an oasis from the bustle of the festival with smaller brands such as black hair care subscription brand 'Treasure Tress' offering hair styling services and goodie bags.

The selection of brands that were on display at the festival felt relevant and tailored to the attendees, further enriching the experience and fostering a sense of community.

By creating an all-inclusive event, with no tiered ticketing or restricted areas, festivalgoers were able to fully immerse themselves in all facets of the festival without feeling that parts of the experience weren't for them. Nor were people bitten by the usual ancillary spend required at festivals (i.e. food & drink)- all of which is a common occurrence at many other festivals where multiple tiers of pricing and value are built into the business model.

"DLT's The Recipe offers a different approach to the same-same ingredients of day festivals"

"This different concept of 'all-inclusive' marks a huge opportunity to maximize the number of people who might interact with brands"

As an endemic part of the festival ecosystem, drinks brand activations are common, but usually involve attendees needing to buy the liquid for their lips to engage with the product. For brands, who ultimately pay a lot of money to connect to people in music festival environments, this different concept of 'all-inclusive' marks a huge opportunity to maximize the number of people who might interact with them. Which can only be a good thing.


DLT's The Recipe offers a different approach to the same-same ingredients of day festivals. By giving every ticket-holder a full, all-inclusive day that makes everyone feel like a VIP, it creates a level playing field for all attendees who are all able to connect with each other. Whether through discussing their equally shared festival experience, posting their newly-made friends on socials or engaging with content from the day that resonates with all attendees, it's a model we can learn from when building our campaigns and brand moments, making sure we extract maximum value by being inclusive in the way we activate, creating the opportunity for strangers to celebrate together and engage with cultural moments as one.

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

CONALL MCATEER, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LONDON

A collage featuring a man in a grey sweatshirt with 'CE' on it, surrounded by basketballs, a blue silhouette of a person, a yellow telephone, and a small photo of the man in a hallway. The background is filled with the word 'STRIKIN' and 'RIGHT'.

GIVE YOUR CONSUMERS A SHARED
LANGUAGE TO CONNECT OVER

Babe wake up, 
Conall just posted.

Digital language is the new aesthetic, and its uniting fans across the globe. It's experiential marketing in its purest form. It can help define a brand, galvanise communities and create togetherness whilst- importantly- allowing for individualism. It's one of the most powerful tools brands have at their disposal, yet it is so often overlooked.

This, undoubtedly, has been a summer owned by Charlie XCX. 'Brat' was a masterpiece in understanding an audience's experiences and desires. It understood the cultural dynamics of who it was speaking to and tapped into that 'hidden' language to connect with them in an intrinsic way. In turn, it has given those communities a movement to love, one that extrapolates their subculture and makes them feel part of something bigger, pulling multiple communities in. The branding- simple and able to be reinterpreted- perfectly represents this because it belongs to the people.

Our audience is evolving. As consumers become more tapped into the creative process by virtue of having their own creative output on social, they are all essentially becoming art director / copywriter hybrids. A life spent alongside the internet; they birth meme culture, trend labels, create slogans. They 'get it' more than your average adland copywriter who's still doggedly, slow-movingly trying to land that killer brand-line that's going to hit the mark. They understand bottom-up, culture-first thinking. They just do it better, and for brands to truly reflect them they need to look to them for inspiration or, even better, collaboration.

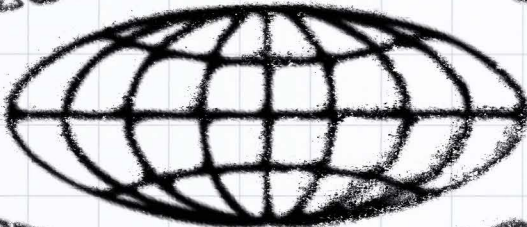
The UK-culture scene has long understood the value of digital language as a means to galvanising new audiences. From Versus finding a unique tone of voice on Instagram which helped them go from disruptive to desired, to Corteiz defining an authentic style of communicating with their community that enabled their language to grow the brand from

'feeling like London' to just feeling like 'Cortez'. The ultimate accolade. Cortez is a brand that utilises their digital language in everything they do; from how they tap into cultural moments to showing up in unpredictable, creative ways. All this, in turn, has captured the hearts, minds and spending power of its now global community.

Yeah... digital language is the new aesthetic alright. And the best aesthetics can trigger intense forms of FOMO, arguably one of the most powerful marketing tools we have, so much so that as much as 60% of people make purchases because of it (Trustpulse 2023). It's a phenomenon which has shown up this Summer in everything from streetwear drops, to the race for Oasis tickets, to even the street-length pub queues we saw for the Euro finals. The balance of inclusive and exclusive drives hype and brand love. Those not connected to the culture want in and once they are there, they're hungry to adopt the languages and codes to help them find togetherness in their new and thriving tribe.

Moving forward, marketers that understand the power of digital language– and who are enabled by their employer brands to appreciate and adopt it in an authentic way– will be able to speak to their audience in a way that fosters a genuine bond. Reflecting back our audience's behaviour with credibility will help ingrain brands in cultural conversations; it will create moments of joy and excitement through understanding who they are and, in doing so, create something truly relatable. A digital language shared, not just between brand and consumer, but consumer-2-consumer via the brand, gives us the ultimate result- togetherness.

DIGITAL LANGUAGE



RULES THE WORLD

16

ISSUE #2

FROM WHERE I' STANDING

LEGITIMISING CONTENT CREATED BY FANS
TO BOOST COMMUNITY CONNECTION

BY JESSIE JEAVONS,
SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER, LONDON

The countdown begins as the streets of North London are filled with 'Williamson' and 'Russo' jersey-wearing fans. A staggering 60,000 tickets were sold to watch the Arsenal and Manchester United Women's teams go head-to-head. It gave Barclays the WSL record-breaking attendance and the atmosphere of the day did not disappoint.

The buzz of match day is near impossible to replicate, but in an era where competition for eyeballs and engagement is hyper, sports organizations are behaving as global culture brands in order to compete in the saturated landscape. As a result, how they show up online is changing.

We all know how core the nostalgia trend is to youth culture today. They yearn for and are buying into and embodying any aspect of predominantly 90s culture. A time before the internet.

In sport, we've seen a 'return to real' by fan communities using 35mm film to give a more human, and fashion-forward, approach to documenting key moments, which has been especially prevalent in women's football. The advantage this delivers is an opportunity to appeal to both younger and older audiences (wouldn't it be interesting to recognise demographics based on their passions rather than their age?) as well as appealing to the peripheral communities across the fashion, sneaker and hype spaces. A simple, authentic-to-the-community aesthetic is migrating audiences in. Something brands should consider when making art direction choices.

Whilst we're living through an era of mass consumption, we're seeing clubs and brands lean more into the authentic content that's created by individuals within community passion spaces. The Arsenal v Man United WSL match was a great example of this in practice, with social feeds littered with fan POV content replicating the vibrant and exciting energy of the day- all through the vintage hue of 35mm film, adding a sense of warmth to the output.

We saw this again with Fulham FC partnering with @expiredfilmclub on Instagram to document their away game against Wolves, or with West Ham tasking fans and creatives to capture film content at their games.

Ultimately, to stand out in the busy online landscape, clubs are leaning on the people within their fanbase to tell the stories that run through the core of their communities. And brands should do the same.

Arsenal are a great example with their 'Creator Club' - a network of amateur photographers, videographers and creatives that are given incredible opportunities to shoot match days and campaigns. Content shot by fans, for fans, that showcases their own experience with the club. As a result, the team have seen their Instagram following grow by nearly 3 million followers over the last 12 months.

When the community is talented in these artforms, the easiest way to make them feel valued and propel their fandom even further is to profile their work from their point of view, creating a more reciprocal, and even more special, relationship that will only serve to deepen connections and grow awareness.

People are looking for real, authentic human connections more than ever via content. It's no longer enough to simply show up with glossy over-produced images that 'represent the club' or the brand. What we need to do is represent the fans, move with intention and dig deeper into how they want to tell the story of their own fandom. Brands who do this will win in the sport of engagement. If audiences want to feel one thing, it's that we're all in this together.

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

THE MOD'S ARE IN LONDON AND IT'S GOT NOWT TO DO WITH OASIS



ROB AND ZANDER, CREATIVES, LONDON

THIS SUMMER, THE FALLOUT TV SHOW DROPPED TO UNIVERSALLY POSITIVE REVIEWS, A GREAT LEAP FOR A COMMUNITY AND CULTURE THAT HAS OFTEN SEEN BELOVED FRANCHISES TAKING ERRONEOUS STEPS INTO MASS MEDIA. LOOKING AT YOU, PRINCE OF PERSIA.

Elsewhere, in the quiet recesses of the internet, another long-awaited Fallout project was also being dropped. A smaller, but no less impressive, community-built project indicative of the dedicated fans behind this franchise: Fallout London.

An unofficial game mod led by a 12-person team and completely self-funded, it picks up the beloved post-apocalyptic theme of the long-standing franchise and drops it right in the heart of London.

Players battle with the Beefeaters (who, as nominative determinism runs wild, are now cannibals), fight irradiate badgers and foxes in Camden, and do some dry cleaning, all alongside your trusty bulldog Churchill. Hundreds of new missions and weapons, a fresh world to explore, and hours of dialogue all created by a community of almost 100 modders and over 100 voice actors, both amateur and professional. A love letter to the franchise, to Britain, and to storytelling.

OH, AND DID WE MENTION THAT IT'S COMPLETELY FREE?

For those of you who have touched grass, I'm sure you're asking, 'what is a mod?'. Short for modification, it's the process of alteration by fans of one or more aspects of a video game. It could be as simple as changing the costume on the character, to turning all the dragons in Skyrim into a fire breathing Thomas the Tank Engine (this is real). It's players given free reign over the controls and features of a game, often to chaotically beautiful effect.

While the 'London' release had some difficulty with Bethesda (the game company that owns Fallout), and a poorly timed update, the game studio are at the forefront of embracing modding culture into their games. Often with their games, they release modification tools that empower their community to play around with their world.

To put this into context, imagine Scorsese giving over the rushes of Goodfellas to the community and saying, "Hey, see what you can do".

This is just one example of the phenomena we're seeing across culture – fan creators. They take their favourite pieces of culture and create communities where they craft their own voice, their own part to play in the evolution of that cultural landscape. Many have tried to speedrun this but there is no secret recipe or shortcut to inspiring or empowering a community. You have to do it with craft and authenticity. To achieve the levels 'London' has, first you have to build love, lore and loyalty.

Sure, giving third parties the green-light to get amongst your code and toy with your IP seems a scary concept, but the advent of modding at this scale doesn't jeopardise the role of studios and developers. In fact, quite the opposite. It heightens their responsibilities, enhances their reach, and grants them licence to inspire whole new generations of builders and storytellers.

And if you're not convinced on the importance of encouraging ingenuity amongst your community, perhaps numbers will do it justice. Skyrim, another Bethesda masterpiece, released on 11 November 2011, still has 2 million active players engaging with the dedicated subreddit. A constant flux of mods being downloaded, and streamers still making content on it. Nothing in the last 15 years has come close.

So if your community is there, why not enable them to be the modders of your brand? As Fallout London has demonstrated, there's nothing quite like a shared project amongst a passionate tribe to create that sense of togetherness.

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

NOMASWAZI
HEAD
SOUTH

OF

PHUMO
STRATEGY
AFRICA

EMBRACING COLLECTIVE ACCESS TO A SHARED RHYTHM

A

GENUINE

CONVERGENCE

Music has long served as a language of love in South Africa. The rise of Kwaito in the 1990s set the stage for the global success of genres like Gqom and Amapiano.

The minimalist rawness of these musical sounds has revolutionised how we experience, consume, and produce music. But beyond music itself, these scenes have exerted a huge influence on the world stage, through its fashion as well as emphasising the country's vibrant textures and innate flair.

The year is 2020, slam-bang in the thick of the pandemic which caused-induced separation, South Africans were feeling a deep yearning for connection. Amapiano emerged as a beacon of hope, with young people across townships, confined to their parents' backrooms and working with makeshift equipment, creating music that brings joy and a sense of unity during a challenging time.

The culture it fostered transcended age groups as families recreated dance moves in their own homes. A different kind of togetherness takes shape where we are desperately needing to create new memories together, to keep each other hopeful and in love with life while the world was stuck at standstill.

Fast forward to 2024 and Amapiano is at the heart of a transformation of music culture, not just within the borders of South Africa, but globally. The pride which has emerged as a result of this has created a mass shift, where South Africans have become emboldened and

more confident in their own artistic DNA, and, as such, less reliant on cultural trends from the West.

In this year's Cotton Fest, the platform created by musician and cultural maverick (the late) Riky Rick, the importance of 'togetherness' was a key theme, with an emphasis on how trust, friendship and collaboration across South Africa's creative industries, from music, fashion design and beyond, is creating a more self-sufficient ecosystem and ushering in a rise of local festivals, headlined by local artists, supported by local brands. It reflects the strength of the emerging creative economy in South Africa, and one that, as we see it explode globally, feels less tied to the requirement of international influence.

The rules have changed.

In 2024, South African musicians are united in championing South African music and the burgeoning culture that surrounds it.

They are no longer following global trends; they are setting them.

The world is now following South Africa. We can call it a new world order.

Music can be a source of local pride and has proven to be a cultural glue for people. It has created a confidence in our own voice and place in the world, which extends to our fashion, along with other artforms, and how they all intersect with each other. For global brands who want to connect to markets around the world, they must take the time to understand the cultural movements within passion spaces that give local people a sense of pride, then celebrate them and help them flourish further. This way they will create genuine brand connections that transcend campaigns and moments in time and put brands at the heart of local culture in a truly authentic way.

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

CEREMONIOUS: UP IN THE PEOPLE BY GIVING THEM SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE OVER

THE OLYMPIC GAMES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT MORE THAN JUST SPORTS. THEY'RE A MOMENT WHEN NATIONS COME TOGETHER, ATHLETES SHINE ON THE WORLD STAGE, AND UNITY AND PRIDE ARE ON FULL DISPLAY.

BY NOËLLA NEFFATI, BUSINESS DIRECTOR, AMSTERDAM

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

That's why fans and, of course, global sponsors embrace these quadrennial demonstrations of togetherness which unite people with multiple intersecting interests to enjoy not only sport, but the range of cultural spin-offs they spark.

But the 2024 Olympics in France carried extra weight as the country struggled with deep internal divisions.

Leading up to the Games, France was feeling the strain, politically and socially. Many French people were also doubtful about the country's ability to successfully host the Games. Questions were asked about whether Paris was truly ready, with its infrastructure under the spotlight. Frustration grew as students and homeless people were pushed out of the city to make room for athletes and to present a cleaner image. The French Olympics Committee didn't escape criticism either, especially for its controversial ban on French athletes wearing hijabs.

Amidst this tension, the opening ceremony felt like a rare moment of harmony- a brief pause in time for the 58 million French viewers glued to their screens. Directed by Thomas Jolly, Daphné Bürki, and Maud le Pladec, the ceremony was more than just an extravagant show of culture and sportsmanship - it was a conscious attempt to stitch the country back together. As Jolly put it, "Everyone was in the rain. We stuck together for this shared humanity in which everyone could recognize themselves and say: Yes, we're all different, but we're all together."

The ceremony was packed with powerful moments. Axelle Saint-Cirel's moving performance of 'La Marseillaise' wasn't just an act but a statement - especially coming from a young, rising star who represents France's racial diversity. Statues of women like Simone de Beauvoir, Olympe de Gouges, and Simone Veil reminded viewers of those who shaped

the nation, while Aya Nakamura's electrifying performance, blending her contemporary touch with Charles Aznavour's legacy, defied traditional expectations as the Franco-Malian artist established herself as a national figure.

The event didn't avoid showcasing France's complex history and diverse culture. From Drag Queens and representations of diverse families to Gojira's metal anthem paired with a memorable visual of Marie Antoinette's decapitated head, the ceremony was a bold and stunning celebration of what France aspires to be: a place of enlightenment that welcomes all, rolling out the red carpet to those who come. It was a timely reminder that in moments of division, what we share can still bring us together.

Across France, fan zones buzzed with excitement. Athletes became heroes in an instant; whether it was Léon Marchand, the Le Brun brothers, Pauline Ferrand-Prévot, or Althéa Laurin - Paris 2024 reignited a passion for sports often only seen during the Olympics. Sceptics were won over, and social media lit up with pride, passion, and happiness. As France moves forward, these games will be remembered as a testament to the power of celebration and unity.

This also serves as a reminder that, in our workplaces and campaigns- especially through partnerships and events- brands have a unique opportunity to bring people together. It doesn't need to be too political or even too bold; just as the Olympics united a divided nation, the power of brands lies in their

ability to create spaces where everyone feels included and part of something bigger. By using their platforms and voices to foster connections, celebrate common values, and build a sense of belonging, brands can also remind us all, as Thomas Jolly would say, of our shared humanity.



TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES



BY IQBAL SAVAGE,
ACCOUNT MANAGER, LONDON

2024 will be remembered as an iconic year for sport with eagerly anticipated events that were contrasting but equally prestigious - UEFA Euro 2024 and the Paris Olympics and Paralympics.

The former had the country obsessed as England's men once again fell short at the final hurdle in a major tournament, while the latter captivated audiences in a way that led millions (possibly billions?) to embrace a more varied sporting diet.

Experiencing our first non-Covid Olympic Games in eight years re-emphasises how football has managed to outpace much of the sporting landscape. Its dominance is unavoidable as a genuine year-round entertainment juggernaut with its lucrative appeal constantly grabbing an over abundance of media and sponsor attention.

Most other sports are left playing a supporting role, but this doesn't have to be the case.

At the heart of our theory of Fancom is the understanding that consumers have multiple intersecting passions- as many as eight each- and the Olympics represented a huge opportunity for sports that live in the shade of football to exert themselves on the world stage and connect with fans looking for their next sporting obsession.

It's tempting to believe that away from the track & field there is limited interest in other sports. But, of course, once the games began for 17 days we were enthralled by the athletic feats of those taking part in sports as diverse as diving, gymnastics, skateboarding and shooting.

Each of these sports, for a brief period, reached a zenith of sporting excellence that hit fever pitch across social media, and the moments witnessed created a sense of community where minor sport became appointment viewing. People couldn't wait to discuss the next 'it moment' with sports they had previously cared little about bringing them together.

The challenge now is for these more niche sports to grow beyond that Olympic moment, making the case to broadcasters to redirect investment away from cash cows like football to enable them to reach new audiences. Otherwise, they will remain destined to only engage fans that are already converts, who will follow them regardless of how obscure the platforms they appear on are.

This is going to need new thinking in terms of audience engagement. These sports now have the opportunity to make the type of move F1 felt it needed to when it embraced the Netflix audience through Drive to Survive. There were actually plenty of clues as to how to do this on show in Paris.

For example, NBC collaborating with Snoop Dogg which fused passions and managed to create appointment viewing in an unconventional way, propelling lesser-followed sports to a major audience.

The Olympics became not only a reminder of the nostalgic and collective experiences sport can foster, it also embraced a new way of engaging fans that could mean minor sports avoid slipping into obscurity over the next four years until the Games in LA.

Giving a share of voice to all sports and using unconventional approaches to invite people in results in more conversations held and more memes created, which enables more opportunities for people to feel a sense of togetherness in their fandom. No matter how niche that fandom may be.

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

TURNED-TIMED-OUT



Andrea Nirsimloo
President & Partner, North America

USE ICONIC SOCIAL CONTENT TO BRING A GLOBAL
AUDIENCE INTO UNSOCIAL TIMEZONE MOMENTS

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

In North America, it's easy to have felt disconnected from the Olympic Games in recent years. Major time zone differences, the global pandemic and scandal-plagued competitions have led many to feel that the Olympic spirit isn't quite what it used to be.

And when it came to Paris 2024, there was inherent skepticism and a lot of critical narratives dominating media coverage, from security to the Seine.

So, how would the Games in Paris manage to spur a coming together of an increasingly disconnected and diverse global citizenship? Is this it for the fabled Olympic spirit that has brought legions together for generations and across boundaries and continents? For North American sports fans, much of the competition had already taken place when they were tuning in, especially for those on the West Coast, pretty much a day behind the action. It's even more challenging to inspire togetherness when there isn't the old-school 'appointment to view' broadcast moment that major sporting events used to galvanize.

And yet... somehow these Games felt more connected, more inclusive, more talked about, more viral – and certainly more 'memed' about – than any Games in recent memory.

Certainly, a softening of IOC regulations that allowed athletes to share more on their social platforms helped bring fans closer to the Games, and importantly, to the athletes. Crucially, the moments being shared were not limited to on the field of play or the pool or the track. These were giving us glimpses of life inside the Olympic Village that we hadn't really experienced before, from the infamously delectable chocolate muffins shared across TikTok to athletes jumping on their 'cardboard' beds in their Village accommodations.

Beyond this more intimate sharing of the Olympic experience, meme culture had a major part to play in sparking conversation and cultivating this feeling of a shared experience – even if you had missed the actual competition due to the time difference. And it was great to see much of this content not coming from the more mainstream sporting occasions, but from more fringe Olympic sports like shooting. Turkish athlete Yusuf Dikec became an internet sensation after

his trademark casual shooting stance went viral. The pose has even become a celebration move in a whole host of other sports, with athletes like WNBA star Sabrina Ionescu and Chelsea soccer player Nicolas Jackson replicating it in-game. Countless other moments ignited social chatter and incredible meme content: the striking image of surfer Gabriel Medina; Clark Kent's doppelganger 'Pommel Horse Guy'; controversial breakdancer 'Raygun'; Bob the Cap Catcher; the French pole vaulter whose crotch allegedly cost him a medal; and the Italian flag bearer who lost his wedding ring during the Opening Ceremony. And of course, Snoop Dogg.

Images and memes from Paris poured from camera lenses into social media verticals across incredibly diverse categories outside of traditional sport, from fashion to food, from entertainment to mainstream news.

From a sponsors' point of view this is gold dust. The ability to reach fans through a range of intersecting passions is at the heart of what we call Fancom. The challenge when it comes to LA 2028 is to get started as soon as possible, because, chances are, it is going to achieve all of the above and more, giving brands the opportunity to activate in more varied, inclusive and compelling ways.

We know that sport can be such a powerful unifier. What Paris Games showed is that it's also the human stories and the events that happen on the periphery of the sporting action that can bring communities together – to the extent that we don't need physical proximity or even to be on the same time zones to feel unified.

It's something we'll see continue into the LA games where we can expect a real fusion of sports and entertainment – already hinted at during the closing ceremony – that will further aim to bring non-traditional sports fans into the Olympics. The Olympic spirit is truly alive and well, and we cannot wait for LA28. And get ready for some serious memage... most likely with Snoop Dogg at the heart of it.

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

Terminal

GIVE PEOPLE SOMETHING IMPORTANT

NIC BUNBY SENIOR EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCER, LONDON

TO TALK ABOUT AND BOND OVER

Impact

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

Glastonbury Festival sits alone as a yearly celebration of not just music and its related hedonism, but as the centre of spectacular cultural moments that own the summer. It is also simultaneously, and arguably more importantly, a place of togetherness, inclusion and diversity. An opportunity for campaigners, activists and artists to reach and educate on a variety of vital subjects in a non-traditional event space, to people from all walks of life, with different passions, views and interests.

In 2024, the organisers took this a step further than usual by commissioning and incorporating an entirely new area, christened Terminal 1 (and supposedly created by Banksy). Interestingly, though the installation was widely reported to be the work of the mysterious artist, he has not taken any credit, despite it bearing many of his classic hallmarks and the clue that few artists could command the type of budget to build something at this scale. Considering he was certainly responsible for the inflatable migrant dinghy during a headline set by Idles, it seems highly likely Terminal 1 was also his handywork.

Described as "a repurposed airport celebrating migration", the installation was a large-scale build and immersive experiential set piece that included a terminal building, passenger boarding stairs, a departure board and its own border control. At points, different people were thrust together to be shouted at in an unfamiliar language, made to feel unsafe, confronted with tough citizenship questions, being engaged by members of the installation to help try and shift perceptions of Rwandans and, moreover, the experiences of people going through a detainment process. Many social videos showed people talking about their shared experience and being allied in their joint shock and perplexity.

While the visual and experiential attention to detail is interesting, important, and to be honest, best in class from a technical standpoint, it tells us that its crucial to immerse the audience in their surroundings, engaging them in a way that grounds the message and brings it to life for people who lack the personal experience to truly relate to the subject.

Going even further, Terminal 1 had a fully programmed musical line-up made up of groups that hold cultural importance in the UK's African-Caribbean community such as the team behind Notting Hill Carnival. Via the inclusion of the musical and 'live' component, you can see the importance of bringing together different cultural threads and passions that add to the in-person experience by providing another way to understand the message being presented. With live music demonstrating itself as a powerful tool to keep people in the space longer, talking about their shared experience together and increasing its significance.

As experiential producers, a significant amount of the work we do is in helping brands activate at sport, entertainment and cultural events (as well as standalone branded events) – thinking about the full on-the-ground experience for people. What we're seeing is a larger spread and quantity of brands seeking to activate experientially at music festivals and the like – with no sign of that growth slowing. As an example, we counted around 20 brands showing up at the All Points East run this Summer in Victoria Park. Much like any other 'marketing channel', brand clutter = noise, not impact. As a result, we need to think deeply about how we up our standards and creativity so the spaces we activate become additive to the fan experience and land our messages in a genuine way. Doing this will enable brands to achieve the cut-through they desire.

What Terminal 1 offers us – with its fusion of art, activism and experiential – is the learning that people don't always need to take home a branded keepsake for your brand to have cut-through. Provoke people into really thinking about something, create the dynamics for strangers to talk about it together, propelling the conversation, and throw in a good ol' boogie for good measure.

And just for the record, if you're still in doubt, you should have seen the queues to get in.

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES



RUNNING FOR YOUR LOVE LIFE. RUN CLUBS ARE THE NEW DATING APP.

LUKE HAYNES,
STRATEGY DIRECTOR,
AUSTRALIA



In news that will shock no single person, there's a growing body of evidence that suggests that dating apps are bad for your mental health, and probably not great for your physical health either.

One peer-reviewed article suggests dating app users experience stress levels triple those of the loved-up [Seide, 2021].

They're not great for your self-esteem. Often not great for your body image. They test our resilience, and our patience. And they probably bear some responsibility for a surge in STIs, with syphilis rates tripling in Australia over the last decade [Kirby Institute, 2023].

It follows, then, that in shareholder filings for Q1 2024, the Match Group, who own Tinder and Hinge amongst others, reported a 6% decline in paying subscribers from the same period of 2023, and have seen Tinder's paying user base decrease for the sixth quarter in a row. At the same time, there's been an explosion of running clubs in Australia, and across the globe. Google search volume has effectively doubled YoY between Winter 2023 and Winter 2024, closing the gap in real terms between the search volume of run clubs and dating apps.

We've all seen it. Hordes of sweaty singles, glowing in the morning sun and beaming with light athletic exertion while they take over a local cafe for a recovery coffee, a chat, and a croissant. Running in Australia has been on an upward trajectory for 20 years, maintaining a growth rate of about 3% since 2002. [source: AusPlay, Australian Federal Government]

But what's new is the social element. Lockdown taught us that there was no substitute for real human connection and togetherness. Whereas peoples' time stuck at home created huge demand for virtual fitness classes and smart, social-led exercise technology, once released back into the wild, health-conscious people wanted to do it with others IRL to satiate the social desires

which had been denied to them for so long. The boom in run clubs is taking place at the intersections of a number of other cultural forces. First, we're tiring of Instagram's relentless propagation of unattainable lifestyles, hence why there's been a drop in Australian social media users this year, with 2.3% or 500,000 fewer users than the previous year [Meltwater, 2024], and a decline in the time spent on social media.

Second, dating apps are shedding paying subscribers in reaction to the soul-crushing numbness of doom swiping, ghosting and dead-end chats with strangers.

Third, economic pressures are forcing us to reconsider how we spend money to keep fit.

Running costs nothing and we're done with looking our best for everyone, all the time. Sometimes it leads to love. Sometimes it leads to a PB. Sometimes it just leads to coffee and a croissant.

But, moreover, its finding joy in proper social connection, with real people, in the real world. Which is the big learning here for brands when understanding where they should spend their marketing dollars.



TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

TOGETHERNESS ARTICLES

CREATE SPACE FOR A
MULTI-PASSION EXPERIENCE

ENTRY POINTS

JONATHAN DIXON, DIRECTOR OF LIVE EXPERIENCE, LONDON

The Super Bowl might just be the most inclusive, intersectional passion event in the world. While (American) football is undoubtedly the main attraction, the event's true appeal lies in its ability to seamlessly incorporate a variety of different passions. The Super Bowl's halftime show is, and always has been, a cultural phenomenon, attracting viewers who might not even be fans of the sport itself, fusing a diverse set of interests including music, dance, theatrics and so on into the ultimate entertainment spectacle. The massively broad appeal it creates, through its 'something for everyone' approach, has made the Super Bowl more than just a contest, it's a globally shared cultural experience.

Like everything good, attempts are made to recreate it. Football's attempts to emulate the Super Bowl have struggled to engage both traditional audiences and those new to football. Perhaps that's due to the nature of football fan culture and the deep roots it has in terms of tradition, behaviours and history. So, if we can see an opportunity to broaden the entry points to football, but it isn't working, then it feels the question we need to be asking ourselves is, "What does it take to create a multi-passion experience that fans and non-fans alike actually want?"

This summer, we've seen a multitude of events hint at how we might get this right. From Louis Tomlinson's hacky approach to serving up a flat screen football viewing at Glastonbury, when the festival said they wouldn't screen it, through to Adele's Olympics pause, a moment which the Independent described as having "delighted fans by streaming the Olympic women's 100 metres semi-final and final at a concert in Munich". What's clear from these examples is that, whatever your budget, if you make space at a passion event for people to gather around a different passion they care about - "they will come". An unexpected experience that people can connect over and enjoy, that transcends the specific reason why they were there in the first place, can

create something really special and unique. Success in creating a multi-passion event/moment lies in an understanding of what your target audience really wants and cares about. Rather than shoeorning additional elements into an event, organizers should focus on creating spaces where the right passions naturally come together, in ways that demonstrate an understanding of the broader cultural frame of reference of a fan base. What works for the Super Bowl won't necessarily work in other sports- the imitation game is a losing one. They may both have a field or a pitch, the stadiums can be easily set up for a live performance and a large proportion of a sporting audience will like music, but it doesn't mean that contracting any old performer with a solid following is going to resonate and create a lasting moment of togetherness.

Ultimately, the goal of your multi-passions event is to make it feel more inclusive and engaging by creating more cultural entry points to your brand, organization or community. It doesn't have to mean inviting everyone in, but understanding the right cultural convergence across music, fashion, sport and art as well as how they naturally relate to each other.

This doesn't need to be a bank-breaking exercise, its more about understanding audiences and their cultural nuances rather than spending heaps of cash. As we've seen this summer, you don't need to invest in a Super Bowl size experience to create a sense of togetherness for your audience. The Killers choosing to stream England's Euro semi-final victory against Netherlands became one of the pieces of standout social content of the tournament- they knew exactly what their multi-passion audience wanted at that moment in time, they gave it to them, and it paid off.

JAKOB MILLER,
HEAD OF STRATEGY, BERLIN

FOOTBALL SUMMER TRAINING CAMPS AS A TRUE FANCOM GATHERING



HOW SOCCER SUMMER TRAINING CAMPS HAVE BECOME
THE MOST AUTHENTIC LINK BETWEEN CLUBS AND THEIR FANS

European soccer teams traditionally held summer training camps in nearby cool-climate locations like Austria or Switzerland. However, the desire to grow international fanbases led many to embark on overseas tours, primarily in the US, Middle East, and Asia.

These trips, while including training, are mainly marketing efforts to attract new fans abroad. Unfortunately, these long-distance camps, exacerbated by recent COVID restrictions, created a disconnect with local fanbases, leading to backlash from dedicated supporters.

In response, many teams have returned to training camps within Europe, actively encouraging fan participation through travel packages and organized events. This approach is proving successful. Popular teams often see thousands of fans joining them, spending part or even their entire summer vacation alongside their favorite players.

With today's jam-packed football schedules, teams have limited opportunities to engage with fans outside of matches. Pre-season training camps offer a unique solution. These camps, often lasting up to two weeks in a single location, include non-football activities that provide fans with rare, up-close access to their favourite players off the field.

Recognizing this, teams actively foster these connections by organizing special events, making training camps the ultimate fan experience throughout the entire season. It's a win-win: teams strengthen their bond with core supporters, while fans enjoy a unique and immersive experience.

Summer training camps have undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving from purely athletic endeavors

into highly anticipated events on the football fan calendar.

Clubs have recognized the value of these camps as a unique opportunity to foster connections with their supporters, going beyond the confines of match days to create intimate and memorable experiences.

By opening their doors to fans during training camps, clubs facilitate a level of access that's unparalleled during the regular season. This includes opportunities to attend open training sessions, participate in meet-and-greets, and even travel alongside the team. The resulting close-up interactions and shared experiences generate a sense of camaraderie and excitement among fans, solidifying their bond with the club and building anticipation for the upcoming season.

These camps also provide a fertile ground for content creation. The unscripted moments, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and candid interactions capture the essence of the team and its players in a way that resonates deeply with fans.

This authentic content fuels social media engagement, strengthens the online community, and amplifies excitement for the new season.

Moreover, the unique atmosphere and access offered by training camps present sponsors with innovative opportunities for brand activation and engagement. From interactive fan experiences to exclusive content collaborations, sponsors can tap into the authentic and passionate environment to connect with their target audiences in meaningful ways.

In essence, summer training camps have evolved into a multi-faceted platform that not only prepares teams for the season ahead but also serves to galvanize fan communities, amplify brand narratives, and create lasting memories for all involved. By opening these moments up, instead of keeping fans out, everyone wins. Which serves as a reminder to brands not to keep their ambassadors, spokespeople or talent behind closed doors, but to give fans a way to engage, interact and live the brand as if they, too, are part of the team.



Simon Wellbelove
HEAD OF STUDIO, LONDON

Emmanuel Olafeye
GRAPHIC DESIGNER, LONDON



Contributors

Tiffany Raab
MULTI-MEDIA CREATIVE, LONDON

Neil Hopkins
STRATEGY PARTNER, LONDON



get in touch
fancom@mcsaatchi.com

