

# Passion is the original social network

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About 20 years ago, mobile phones began to buzz with text messages alerting fans to the scoring of goals, touchdowns, birdies, centuries and more.



With that, their ability to avoid results until the highlights were shown that evening disappeared.

Up to that point, if you couldn't physically get to the game, there were few obstacles in your way when it came to dodging the score.

Covid-19, of course, placed an enormous obstacle in the way of games actually taking place during lockdown and, even now, there are very few places in the world where fans are allowed into stadiums for live events in any great number.

But now fixtures are back on, thanks to social media there is very little chance of you making it through to the evening highlights without discovering at least the score. In fact, chances are you've already waded into the discussion about a VAR decision that went against your team.



MARKETING & MEDIA

Pushing pause on events doesn't mean pushing pause on the fan experience

Clint Paterson, Levergy 11 May 2020



In the absence of being able to experience the visceral thrill of attending a live game – from a pre-game pint right through to calling the radio phone-in on the long journey home on the road after a win – social media has stepped in to provide the next best thing.

“ But social media isn't the driver of this excitement and brands need to remember that it is merely the conduit for a

*passion that has placed live sport and entertainment right at the beating heart of our culture.* ”

And Covid-19 has, if nothing else, reminded us of just how our passions define who we are and the communities we build around us.

We can go to concerts or festivals anywhere in the world and bond with fellow music fans. We can roll into a bar in Auckland and share rugby stories over a pint with people we have met just moments before.

Our passions are both the ‘carrier signals’ that draw us into the stadium alongside the people we love and admire as well as the banner under which we unite.

They are the lingua franca that provide the bridge between cultures split apart by geography and politics, a means of improving human relations unrivalled in history.

Shortly before lockdown, we worked with Canvas8 to quantify the extent to which passions dominated people’s lives and the answers we got went way beyond our expectations in describing a commitment that transcends the everyday.

Some highlights of the research include:

- 48% of sports fans told us their fandom defines them more than their religion, rising to 52% amongst music fans
- Nearly one in three attended as many matches as they could afford
- 38% of sports fans (36% of music fans) would skip a wedding to go to match or concert
- 37% of sports fans would quit their jobs if they could support themselves as full-time fans
- 33% of sport fans (and 28% of music fans) say watching their team or favourite athlete or artist play in a match or concert is better than having sex

Post-Covid, we’ll depend more than ever on our passions to reconnect and reunite us and this is the message that brands and sponsors need to keep reminding themselves of.

There is no better or more effective means of engaging customers than through the things they love.

However bleak things look at the moment, the frustration fans feel at being unable to enjoy live experiences now means the opportunity to fully re-engage with fans when normality returns will be huge.

#### Key take-out:

“ *Shared passions are an incredible driver of human relationships.* ”

Brands should be planning right now how best to take advantage of the moment when fans’ pent up frustration is unleashed through the return of live experiences. Fans will reward those brands that stuck by their passions through the pandemic, rewarding them for their continued commitment

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