

The New Sporting Era

TikTok's Role in Next-Gen Fan Engagement



Introduction: New Era in Participatory Sports Spectatorship



The landscape of sports fandom is undergoing a transformation. The live match being confined to broadcast TV is a thing of the past; it is an active, always-on exchange of culture, commentary, and community. Our research confirms that sports content on social and video platforms is now mainstream, **with 88% of users globally expressing interest¹, underscoring the universality of sports as a digital entertainment driver.** In this new era, TikTok has emerged as a notable second screen experience, helping to reshape how audiences discover and engage with sports-related content.

Our latest research across seven global markets reveals that TikTok has become a dynamic arena for building the next generation of fandom. **From "super casual" viewers to "hardcore" loyalists, fans are moving away from static consumption toward a participatory culture where they don't just watch the game, they co-create it.** This paper explores how TikTok's unique architecture is attracting new diverse audiences and driving measurable off-platform (e.g., live tune in on cable/streaming, subscribe to streaming services, ticket sales, merchandise sales, etc.) actions that matter to rights holders and brands alike.

1. TikTok Publishers Global, TikTok Sports Messaging Research, commissioned by TikTok in collaboration with Ipsos, Global results, Jun.-Jul. 2025

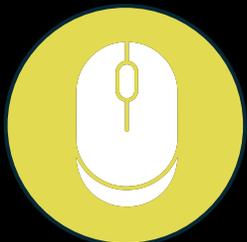
Methodology



**US, UK, Germany, France, Japan,
Korea, Brazil, Total n=7,000**



**TikTok Users & Non-Users
ages 18-49**



**20-minute, online device
agnostic survey**



**Surveyed
June-July 2025**

This research, commissioned by TikTok in collaboration with Ipsos, surveyed 1,000 individuals in each market (US, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Korea, and Brazil) aged 18-49, including 800 TikTok users. Conducted from June 25, 2025, to July 10, 2025. The 20-minute online survey required participants to be a current monthly users of at least one social/video platform and have engaged with sports content on any social/video platform.



From Discovery to Active Engagement

The Gateway: Where the Foundation of Fandom Flourishes

TikTok's ecosystem provides a foundation for sports discovery that transcends the linear experience on traditional media platforms. It is not just a feed; it is an engine of relevance and engagement.



HIGH PERSONALIZATION

Sports fans surveyed are

1.3x more likely to use TikTok over other platforms because of the **recommended personalized content**¹

This "discovery-first" environment is critical for expanding the sports funnel

- **Half of super casual fans** surveyed say they value how TikTok recommends personalized content¹
- **Over 2 in 5** say it helps them discover content they wouldn't have found elsewhere¹



ENTERTAINMENT MEETS EDUCATION

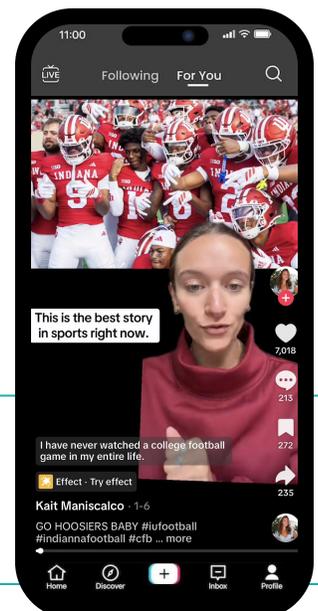
TikTok doesn't stop at being entertaining.

One of its top strengths as a sports content platform is **utility**¹; it serves as a key tool for fans to **learn something new about a sport, team, or player**



Women on TikTok get even more utility out of the platform

They're 1.2x more likely to find utility in sports content on TikTok compared to male fans¹



1. TikTok Publishers Global, TikTok Sports Messaging Research, commissioned by TikTok in collaboration with Ipsos, Global results, Jun.-Jul. 2025

Beyond the Broadcast: Fueling the Cycle of Active Fandom

This culture of co-creation and conversation means that on TikTok, what's in play for sports moments extends beyond the field or court and lives both before and past the game whistle.

The shift from passive viewership to active fandom is quantifiable. Compared to other platforms, fans surveyed on TikTok are:

- 1.3x** more likely to duet or stitch a video
- 1.3x** more likely to share posts through DM
- 1.3x** more likely to join trends and challenges
- 1.2x** more likely to share posts publicly



Conversations are happening on TikTok.

TikTok turns "spectators" into "contributors" by providing tools that make it easy to react to and reinterpret sports moments in real-time. **Features like Duets and Stitches give fans simple ways to react to a moment, add their own perspective, or build on someone else's video.** Fans use these tools more on TikTok than on other platforms, which helps turn even casual viewers into active contributors and expands what it means to be a fan.

1. TikTok Publishers Global, TikTok Sports Messaging Research, commissioned by TikTok in collaboration with Ipsos, Global results, Jun.-Jul. 2025

The "Sticky" Factor: Deepening Community Roots through Small Actions



TikTok redefines participation by turning passive viewing into a communal experience, where every 'save' and 'tag' acts as a vote of relevance that keeps the sports conversation alive.

Compared to sports fans surveyed on other platforms, fans on TikTok are

1.2x more likely to **save a post** and **tag a friend**¹

These small actions add up, helping TikTok surface sports content to more people and deepening its reach across fan communities.

Together, these behaviors keep momentum going.

When fans can share and discover content that matches their interests, they stay entertained, learn something new, and lean in – creating a continuous cycle that connects fans with their favorite teams, leagues, and athletes on TikTok.



1. TikTok Publishers Global, TikTok Sports Messaging Research, commissioned by TikTok in collaboration with Ipsos, Global results, Jun.-Jul. 2025



A New League of Her Own

A Top Arena: TikTok as a First Touchpoint for Female Fans

A point highlighted by the data is TikTok's role as a go-to destination for female sports fans. The platform offers accessible entry points into sports and allows for a diverse range of content to find the right audience, creating an inclusive environment where athlete stories resonate deeply.

TikTok's role as a "first stop" is especially true for female fans, who are more likely to encounter sports content here before they see it on traditional broadcasts or league-owned channels.

From First Touchpoint to First Quarter Viewership

In total, **58%** of female fans surveyed view sports content on TikTok¹.

Female fans are **1.4x** more likely to choose TikTok as their top platform¹ for doing so compared to male fans.



46% say TikTok makes them **more interested** in sports¹

42% say TikTok helps them **learn something new** about a sport, team, or player¹

41% say TikTok helps them **discover sports content** they would have never found on their own¹

1. TikTok Publishers Global, TikTok Sports Messaging Research, commissioned by TikTok in collaboration with Ipsos, Global results, Jun.-Jul. 2025



Community & Connection: How Female Fans Drive Multi-Source Consumption

At its core, engagement on TikTok is deeply communal and immersive. For female fans, TikTok fosters a sense of belonging, helping nearly **half** of those **surveyed feel more connected to their favorite team or athlete**¹.

Female Fans Boast Broad & Sustained Consumption

Female fans are not just watching highlights; they are driving a multi-source consumption pattern. Women engage more than men across every major format on TikTok:

- **Official Account Content: 67% (Women)** vs. 62% (Men).
- **Fan/UGC Videos: 63%** vs. 57%.
- **Public Figure Content: 63%** vs. 54%.
- **Content Creator/Influencer Content: 66%** vs. 61%

Additionally, they are not only equally as likely to engage during events, but are actually more likely to participate in **pre- and post-event engagement** activities **(+4 pts)**

Content posted by **professional athletes** is particularly powerful, with a

58%

female audience on the platform².

Human Storytelling: A Gateway to Female Fandom

Help female fans further their engagement and deepen relationships with their favorite teams and characters, on and off the field, via athlete interviews and behind-the-scenes content

1. TikTok Publishers Global, TikTok Sports Messaging Research, commissioned by TikTok in collaboration with Ipsos, Global results, Jun.-Jul. 2025

2. TikTok Internal Data (2025), analysis of a set of accounts over a 12-month period



From Scrolling to Scoring

From Discovery to Action: Turning TikTok Views into Tune-in IRL

The "TikTok effect" extends beyond the phone screen. Engagement on the platform drives tangible, real-world value for sports properties and brands. This is the "Tune-in Effect."

After viewing sports content on TikTok, fans surveyed:



42%

will go on to tune in via TV or streaming services¹



36%

will go on to look up more information about the sport¹



27%

will go on to buy something they saw an athlete wearing, using, or promoting¹



23%

will go on to attend a sporting event¹

TikTok users are a high-value consumer segment. Compared to non-users, they are significantly more likely to make sports-related purchases:



1.5x
Streaming
Subscriptions



1.5x
Team Merch



1.4x
Tickets

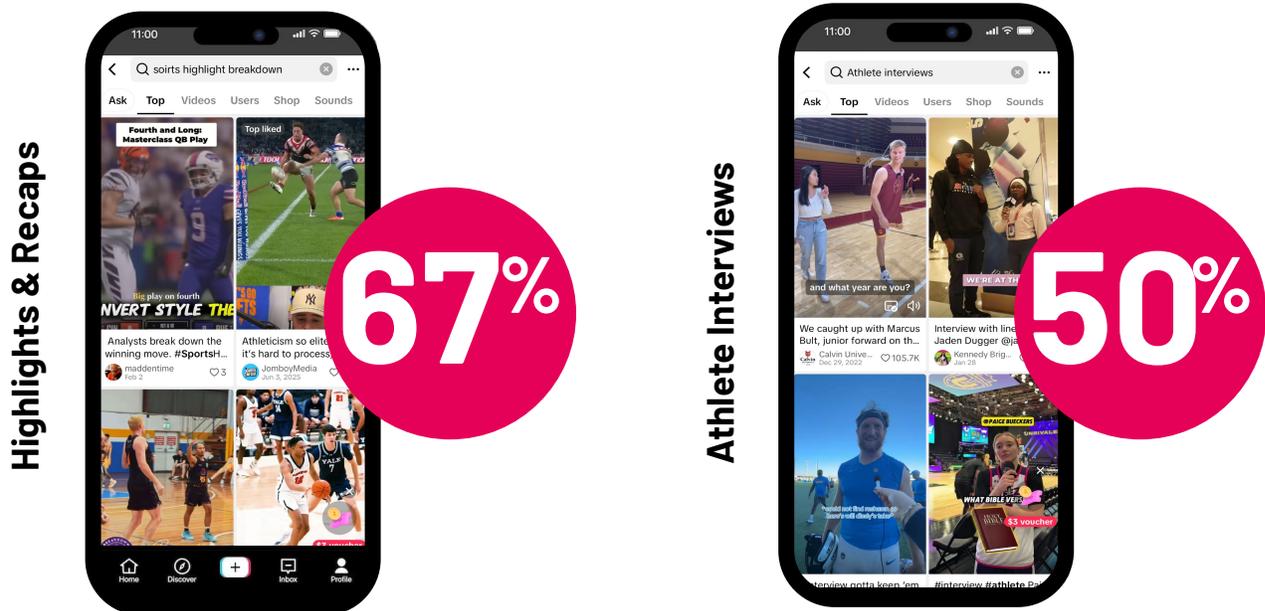
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The Future of the Feed

Always-On, Always-Live: Capturing Fandom in Real-Time

The future of sports consumption is social, video-first, and real-time. **Highlights and recaps** and **athlete interviews** are ranked highest when it comes to which types of sports content sports fans are interested in viewing on TikTok¹.



Highlight and recap culture is evolving into cultural amplification - where fans don't just relive a sports moment, they reinterpret it and share it, among others. In addition to, the appetite for live experiences is growing rapidly.

The Second Screen Standard:

- **85%** of fans already engage with TikTok during live events, and **94%** use it to catch up on highlights they missed.
- **The LiveStream Opportunity:** If TikTok offered live sports streams, **53%** of fans say they would watch and engage. This figure rises to **65%** for Gen Z,
- **Real-Time Connection:** Gen Z and Millennials are particularly eager to be notified when highlights drop, reinforcing TikTok's role as the pulse of real-time sports consumption.

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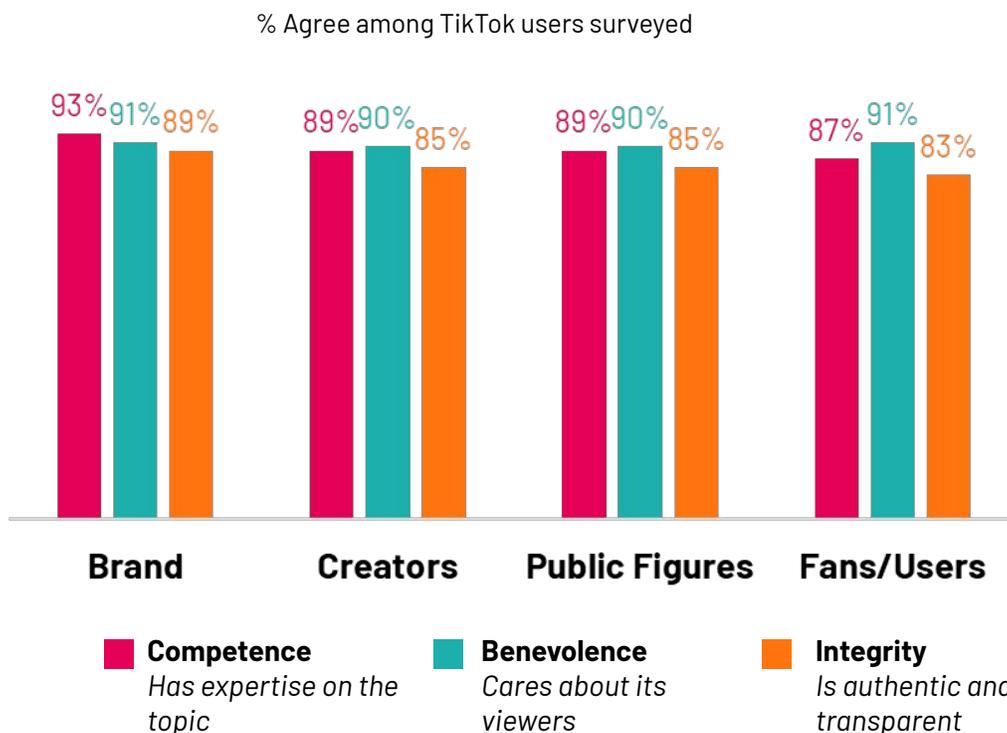
The Content Loop: Engaging Fans Across All Content Sources

Consumers value and trust sports content from all sources—UGC, creators, official brands, and public figures such as athletes or coaches¹.

Lack of differentiation, in terms of trust, between sources demonstrates that each can play a role.

There is no one answer; rather, the key to sustained engagement is to reach consumers across all four sources with the right content at the right sports moments.

How well does each type of content on TikTok resonate with viewers on the different elements of trust?



The result is an ecosystem built on trust, participation, and emotional resonance, turning sports moments into shared cultural currency.

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Closing

The Winning Play: Cultivating the Future of Global Fandom

TikTok has helped redefine sports fandom, playing a key role in the paradigm shift from passive viewership to an active, participatory culture.



Discovery Engine:
TikTok turns casual viewers into formed fans



A Fan Fav:
TikTok is top destination for female audiences



The Essential Arena:
TikTok is where global fandom is cultivated, engaged & monetized



Action Driver:
Sports content on TikTok drives tune-in and sales



For publishers and brands, TikTok is no longer just a distribution channel; it is an essential arena for cultivating, engaging, and monetizing the future of global sports fandom.

1. TikTok Publishers Global, TikTok Sports Messaging Research, commissioned by TikTok in collaboration with Ipsos, Global results, Jun.-Jul. 2025

Acknowledgements

About TikTok

TikTok is the leading destination for short-form mobile video. Our mission is to inspire creativity and bring joy. TikTok has offices across the globe, including in Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Dubai, Singapore, Jakarta, Seoul, and Tokyo.

About Ipsos

Ipsos is the world's third largest market research company, present in 90 markets and employing more than 18,000 people. In our world of rapid change, the need for reliable information to make confident decisions has never been greater. At Ipsos we believe our clients need more than a data supplier, they need a partner who can produce accurate and relevant information and turn it into actionable truth. This is why our passionately curious experts not only provide the most precise measurement, but shape it to provide True Understanding of Society, Markets and People. To do this we use the best of science, technology and know-how and apply the principles of security, simplicity, speed and substance to everything we do. So that our clients can act faster, smarter and bolder.

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Methodology

Quantitative Survey

- 20 minute online, device-agnostic survey
- US, UK, Germany, France, Japan, South Korea, Brazi (n=800 TikTok Users, n=200 Non-TikTok Users per market)
- Sample Criteria
 - Adults 18-49
 - Current TikTok users (have used TikTok within the past month) OR Non-TikTok users (have used other social platforms in the past month)
 - Have engaged with sports content on social/video platforms
- Surveyed June-July 2025

