



# ADVERTISING DURING THE WORLD CUP

The Benefits  
of Emotion



# CONTEXT

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**Every four years the World Cup creates unparalleled global excitement. This year's tournament is expected to reach its biggest audience yet, with Fifa estimating that 3.4 billion people worldwide will tune in to the tournament. In addition, The New York Times revealed that Fifa are expecting to generate \$6.1bn in revenue, which is up \$1.3bn from last year; cementing this year's tournament as the biggest sporting spectacle of all time.**

Across the globe fans cheer on their nations, hoping for the best yet, in England's case, expecting little. In fact, in a recent Ipsos survey, only 3% of England fans believed their team could win the tournament, meaning a whopping 97% of us held no hope. But, who can blame us? It was only 2 years ago that England fell to an embarrassing knock out defeat at the hands of Iceland at Euro 2016. In fact, England had not registered a win in a knock out game since 2006. So, is it that surprising that going into the tournament, expectations were significantly lower

than say Germany (the previous winners), Portugal (the current European champions) and Argentina (who boast arguably the game's finest ever player in their squad)?

Despite the British pessimism, and the insistence after the Iceland defeat never to watch England again (just me?), 18.3 million of us tuned in to watch England's opening win against Tunisia, 16.9 million watched as we put a record 6 goals past Panama, and, a record breaking 24.4 million of us endured the tortuous emotional rollercoaster of England's penalty shoot-out victory over Colombia, to advance to the Quarter Finals of the World Cup, making it the most watched live sporting event in 14 years!

With this victory, we as a nation are starting to believe.

Given these record-breaking viewing figures and a highly emotional audience, we asked ourselves what this means for advertisers? Do these high viewing figures and people's emotional investment impact their response to advertising, particularly

ads that explicitly link to the World Cup? For instance, if England win and then viewers see an ad featuring England players, do we respond differently? If this context does make a difference, what are the learnings that brands can use to ensure they are exploiting this emotional wave to the fullest?

As a result, we decided to invest in some research to fully understand our subconscious response to advertising, and whether our feelings around the World Cup change our emotional engagement and attention levels with different ads.

To do this, we used Electroencephalography (EEG), which is a method of monitoring electrical activity in the brain. It works by placing electrodes on people's heads to record spontaneous brain activity, helping us truly understand our sub-conscious emotional reactions to the content we are viewing. To give further insight, we also combined the EEG with Eye Tracking, to allow us to see what people notice within the ad, and to understand



# EMOTION

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## Only 3% of England fans believed their team could win the tournament.

which creative elements are driving the response from our brain.

For this study, we adopted a pre/post approach, whereby we recruited 30 England fans to watch 4 ads before the World Cup started, and then invited the same people back again after England had defeated Colombia (when the nation was in a state of euphoria), to watch the same 4 ads again, to see if the joy surrounding our victory, impacted the way we responded to the advertising.

Each of the 4 ads we exposed our participants to were carefully chosen:

- Dream Big with Lidl – this ad was chosen as it features England World Cup squad members Gary Cahill, Raheem Sterling and Kyle Walker playing football with young children. It makes numerous references to the World Cup and England's performance.
- 2018 Fifa World Cup Coca-Cola – this ad was selected as it is the official World Cup ad for Coca-Cola.

- LG OLED TV – although this ad does not focus specifically on the World Cup, it centres around being a football fan and how the LG OLED offers an innovative experience of keeping up to do with football.
- HSBC Global Citizen – with almost no reference to football or the World Cup, this ad was chosen due to its patriotic tone, as the ad focusses on how, despite uncertainty surrounding our future, the UK is part of something bigger and working together we can all thrive.

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### What we found

The EEG findings produce two key metrics in relation to response to the advertising: 1. Attention – which measures the extent to which the ad is capturing viewer attention and how much information is processed and 2. Emotional Engagement – which is whether the ad is causing a positive or negative emotional response, and the intensity



# ENGAGEMENT

of the emotions i.e. whether positive or negative and weak or strong.

Primarily we learned that context does make a difference. We found that, in the post wave, whilst attention with the ads was slightly down – which is understandable as people had already been exposed to the ads - emotional engagement had significantly risen for two of the ads: Lidl, which featured England players, references to the iconic “three lions” and the World Cup, and HSBC, which centred around national pride.

For the Lidl ad, overall emotional engagement grew 15%! Within the ad, Gary Cahill is asked “are we going to do well in the tournament”, before being asked “what are those on your shirt” referring to the “three lions”. Here emotional engagement increased by over 20% versus the pre wave. In addition, emotional response peaked as one of the young children scored his penalty and ran off celebrating, bringing back memories of the previous night’s antics.

With HSBC, engagement lifted a huge

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31%, as the sense of national pride resonated with people even more after the match, with the only football scene in the ad generating a 28% increase in emotional response.

Response to the Coca-Cola ad remained consistent, but high, between the two waves, suggesting that people were excited about the World Cup beforehand, and continued to show the same level of excitement, as England remains in the competition. The one interesting and noticeable change was a positive uplift in emotional engagement as Coca-Cola ask whether fans are “ready for kick off”, suggesting the anxiety and anticipation of the Quarter Final match against Sweden was firmly in people’s mind set.

The key learning from this then is that, as emotions run high, brands and advertising do have the ability to ride the “emotional wave” and profit it from it, as we have seen from both HSBC and Lidl, who saw significant increases in engagement, by creating an explicit link to either England’s performance at the



# PATRIOTISM

World Cup, or by having an underlying patriotic tone and a time where national pride is on a high.

However, in order for brands to benefit the most, they need to fully commit to this approach. For example, Lidl reaped the rewards of including current England players and focussing purely on football as the explicit link generated a strong response. In contrast, whilst the LG ad performed well, by focussing on the “generic” football fan, and not making overt links to the World Cup or England’s performance, it was not able to amass the same positive uplift as the other ads. In fact, the LG ad was the only one that did not show any difference in emotional engagement between the pre and post waves.

The one argument of course is that this is a risky strategy. With Lidl, their success was undeniably based on the success of the England team, and, had we had a repeat of Euro 2016, it is likely that we would not have had the same responses. In fact, we conducted this research in 3 other markets: Mexico, Argentina and

Germany, and the post wave in Germany was conducted just after they failed to make it out of the group stages, so it will be interesting to see the impact of their shock elimination.

Therefore, for LG their safer option of not being too explicit eliminates that risk. However, for the brands that do take the risk, it pays off, as these brands see a much bigger benefit.

Our conclusions from this research are that context can make a big difference to the emotional response to advertising. In England, the buzz around the World Cup has significantly impacted engagement, meaning that brands do have the ability to profit from this. However, to make the most of this, brands need to go all in, and build strong links to the event, with devices such as: a patriotic tone, inclusion of current players or explicit references to the competition. Whilst this is undoubtedly a risky strategy, the benefits are much better than those who play it safer with a more generic theme. Our recommendation though would be that whilst we would absolutely encourage

brands to take the risk, always have a backup plan/ad in the event of Germanesque World Cup performance.

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