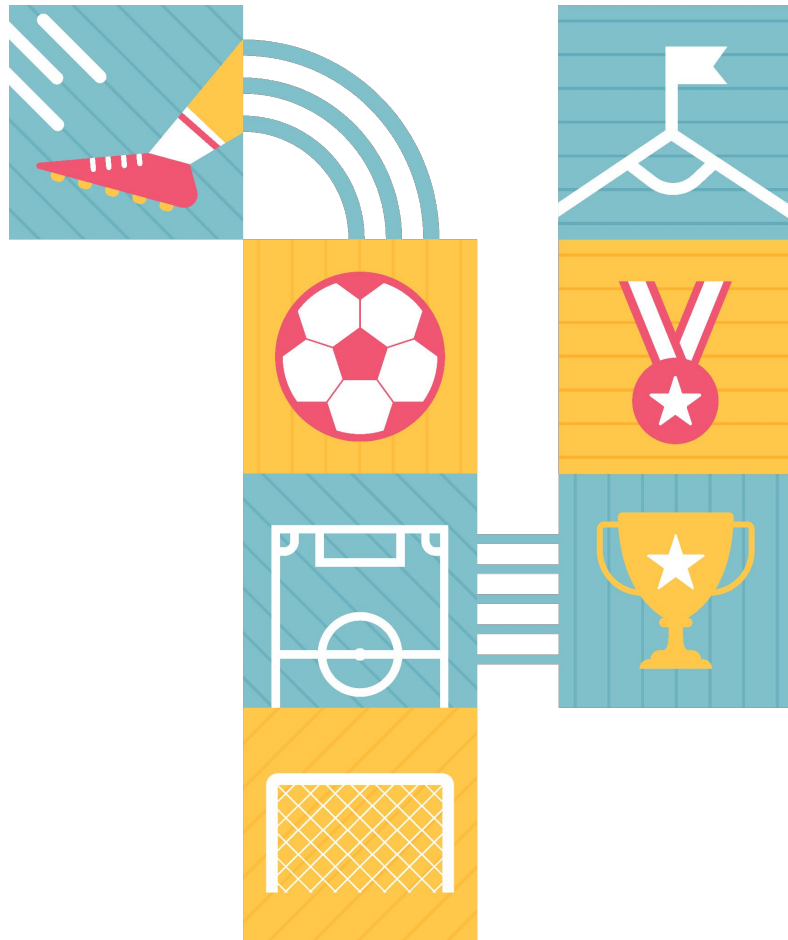


From Pitch to Podium:

A Playbook for Brands to Win the FIFA World Cup 2026™

How to Tap Into Fandom, Culture, and
Community at the World's Biggest Event



To build this playbook, we tapped into Escucha™, our proprietary methodology including social listening, cultural intelligence and the brainpower of our soccer insiders across BODEN.

The result: insights that merge AI trend-spotting with on-the-ground expertise in fútbol culture and brand storytelling.



The Game Plan

Step 1

Recognize What a Huge Deal This Is

Step 2

Understand the Fandom

Step 3

Decide in Which Corner of Culture Your Brand Can Engage In

Step 4

Map Out Your PR & Influencer Strategy

Step 5

Begin to Take Action Now



Step 1

Recognize What a Huge Deal This Is

The 2026 World Cup is going to be the biggest in history: 48 teams, 16 cities, millions of fans. In the U.S. alone, it's projected to pump \$17B into the economy.

This is the first time the U.S. will host the Cup at this scale, alongside Canada and Mexico. Think Super Bowl x March Madness x Coachella but on repeat, for five straight weeks. **This is a once-in-a-generation shot for your brand.**





Step 2

Understand the Fandom

You can't show up if you don't get it. For diehard soccer fans, Hispanic & Latino fans especially, fútbol isn't just a sport; it's identity, family, heritage, and pride. It's generational passion.

If your brand treats it like just another "sports moment," you'll miss the heartbeat of the culture and the potential of the impact for your brand. Think about your target by fan type as their passion is nuanced, as is their behavior across social platforms.



Step 3

Decide in Which Corner of Culture Your Brand Can Engage In

Engaging with fans by digging deep into subcultures that intersect with fútbol is how your brand will make an impact during this World Cup.



Fútbol as Fashion

Fútbol as Fashion: Jerseys aren't just for the pitch anymore. They're streetwear, collector pieces, and cultural statements.

Limited-edition sneaker collabs and TikTok fashion drops tied to national teams are already trending. *Can your brand play in this space?*





Community Fans

The heartbeat of U.S. soccer is outside the stadiums. Families hosting weekend leagues, youth teams in Philly or LA, and local futsal tournaments in Houston will expand the World Cup footprint.

From a coach running drills in the Bronx to teens playing street soccer in Miami, these stories are what make soccer personal. ***Is this type of storytelling ownable and authentic to your brand?***

Spaces for Joy

Iconic World Cup moments will also happen off the pitch. They'll be born in living rooms, sidewalks turned into mini soccer fields, block parties, or local community centers streaming matches for the neighborhood.

And, there will be month-long Fan Fests all across the U.S. Even small businesses, like local bars, shops, and bodegas, will become major gathering spots. ***Does your brand have a unique role in these spaces?***





The Added Flavor

Soccer isn't just a game; it's a reason to gather, eat, drink, and celebrate. From backyard asados to empanadas at tailgate-style watch parties, and drinks to celebrate the wins, food and drink is central to soccer now, and will enhance fans' experiences of the tournament.

What flavor can your brand add to the enjoyment of the World Cup?



Fandom as Soundtrack

Music drives the fandom. From Latin American chants at matches and watch parties, to viral TikTok dances, goal celebration songs, the sounds of the incredible *barras*, curated game-day playlists, and team hype tracks, music is a key way fans experience and share their fandom throughout the World Cup.

Can your brand be a curator of entertainment?





Fútbol Gamification

Gaming and esports are major touchpoints for Gen Z fans. FIFA video games, mobile challenges, and esports tournaments create opportunities for brands to insert themselves into competitions, launch in-game activations, and connect with fans in virtual spaces.

Can your brand be a connector of IRL passion to digital play?





Step 4

Map Out Your PR & Influencer Strategy

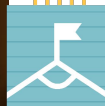
The FIFA World Cup 2026™ isn't just the biggest sporting event in the world, it's the cultural moment of the decade – and the media, influencers and other stakeholders will want in on it. The question is: **will your brand show up in a way that will break through?**



What's the story you'll tell?

Soccer fans can smell inauthenticity a mile away. You need a narrative that feels true to the game, honors the communities that built it, and connects your brand to the joy, pride, and emotion of the tournament.

And, editorial teams need differentiated content to cut through tournament saturation. Taking the time to craft your brand's story carefully to ensure it resonates with fans is what will help you stand out among the sea of sameness.





How are you engaging influencers?

From creator collectives tied to Host Committees to lifestyle, fashion, food, nightlife, and entertainment influencers in host cities, the game is bigger than the pitch. The right voices will give you credibility and scale, but more importantly, they'll give you cultural relevance.

If you engage creators, consider micro-creators like barra leaders, freestylers, and even fan photographers – they have smaller followings but massive influence. Your brand should be talking to them now, while the playbook is still being written.



How will your story cut through the clutter?

Sports media will own the highlights, but are craving culture too. Also, lifestyle, music, consumer, and entertainment outlets are all looking for fresh, unexpected World Cup angles.

Do you have the relationships and the earned strategy to cut through the noise and insert your brand into the broader conversation? Partner with “jinfluencers” (journalists who are influencers) who also write for Substack, sports blogs, or lifestyle mags. They operate in two ecosystems, amplifying your brand across creator and media channels.





How will you engage fans on social media?

The World Cup is built for real-time storytelling. The memes, chants, goal celebrations, and heartbreaks spread fastest on social media. The brands that win will know how to move in the moment and do it with the right tone, in the right language, for the right fans.

Design stickers, memes, and chant clips for easy sharing. Don't forget WhatsApp, it's the #1 communications app for Latino, African, and European fans, driving fandom. As the World Cup approaches, you'll need cross-functional monitoring, content deployment, and response. Speed and coordination will be critical during all the high-volume, high-emotion moments. And consider keeping 20% of content unplanned for real-time reactions. The World Cup is unpredictable. Memes and viral reactions drive visibility.



Step 5

Begin to Take Action Now

Provide unforgettable experiences

If you're an official sponsor, truly demonstrate that you're more than a logo on a banner. Give fans what they can't get anywhere else: raw player moments, behind-the-scenes content, immersive experiences are just the tip of it.

Own the rich soccer rituals

Be there for the pre-game hype, for the halftime break, and post-goal celebrations. Dig deep into the fandom.

Start local but think national

Show up in neighborhoods where fans live, in the languages they speak - with humility and authenticity.



Begin to Take Action Now

Tell real stories

The futsal team in Philly. The Bronx living room with 20 cousins. The Houston street match. That's where the magic is – dive deeper than surface-level engagement.

Live beyond the pitch

Activate in barbershops, bodegas, block parties, and pickup games - insert yourself into those “unofficial” watch parties and moments of enjoyment.

Play in real time

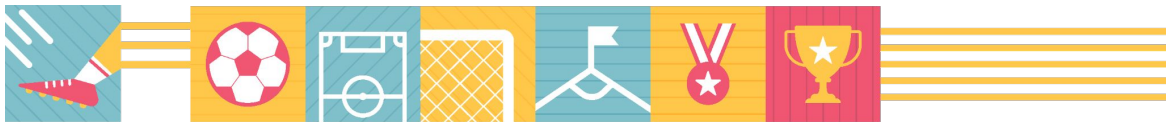
The brands that win will ride the waves of goals, upsets, viral chants, and memes happening all throughout the tournament.



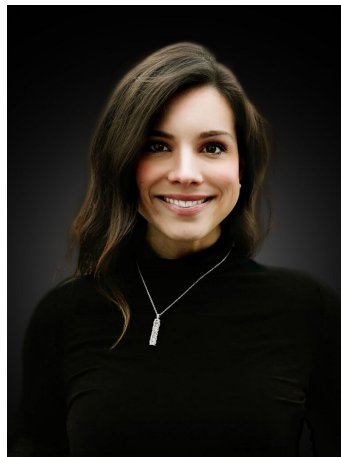
Bottom line

The World Cup is too big, too cultural, and too emotional to treat like a traditional sports event.

As a brand it's important to understand the power of fútbol — from global stage to local pitch — the passion of fans, the influence of Hispanic and Latino fandom, and the cultural forces shaping this once-in-a-generation moment.



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