

# Generation STREAM

GLOBAL EDITION

*Presented by Disney Advertising*



## The New Wide World of Sports

The new rule for sports fandom is that there are no rules. Full-length games and social media highlights are trending side by side. Fans are local, global, and everywhere in between, and new and fresh formats are flourishing.

Welcome to The New Wide World of Sports!



Jessica, 41, of Seoul, Korea, is both a sports fan and an athlete herself. If she's not training for triathlons, she's rock climbing. After seeing a recent post about National Geographic's *Arctic Ascent with Alex Honnold* on Facebook, she decided to check it out. "[The series] was actually much more about environmental topics like, global warming. Those are all topics I'm very passionate about," noting that the cinematography in the show was "beautiful." But an equal part of her motivation for streaming *Arctic Ascent* was Alex Honnold, the climber the series follows. "He has a quirky personality," Jessica remarked—and that's part of the allure. **As much as Jessica appreciates the show's beautiful footage, coverage of environmental issues, and the sport itself, she also likes the human side of the story.** It's not surprising that Jessica's also a fan of ESPN's *30 for 30*. "I really enjoy when they pull up [an athlete's] high school footage, or Michael Jordan on a public basketball court as a kid. I think getting to know that athletes are human is really important." She reflected, "It's like, 'hey, I failed, Michael Jordan also failed. He's human, like me.'"







▶ 67%

of Global Sports Fans are interested in editorial, documentaries, and storytelling about players, teams, coaches, or management.



“To see a player just be really open and maybe cry; it’s just a moment of humanity it makes you feel like, yeah, players feel these things too.”

Simon  
50, London, UK



Like Jessica, 67% of Global Sports Fans are interested in editorial, documentaries and storytelling about players, teams, coaches or management. For Erin, 35, of Sydney, Australia, this includes how athletes prepare themselves for a race or for game day. As an avid runner herself, she tunes into multiple forms of media to capture the 360 picture of athletes, as well as the “science and biology” of running. “I listen to podcasts and go through all of the amazing protocols that not only get you ready for being a professional athlete, because not everybody is like that, but also how to get the best out of yourself.”

As proof of this growing interest in athletes’ lives ‘off the field’ and the human side of sports—a trend we covered in “Complete Athlete” (Generation Stream: Sports Edition)—**sports documentaries have risen to a top five sub-genre of content among Global Audiences**, whether they consider themselves to be sports fans or not. This love for sports beyond the game is just one new dimension of The New Wide World of Sports.

## Cross-Cultural Sports Fandom

Audiences' interest in sports surpasses borders. Another athlete Jessica follows is Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Dodgers. **Jessica explained there are a lot of Dodgers fans in Korea because they have strong ties to Los Angeles, CA.** She herself spent a year in LA, which strengthened her love for baseball, and for Shohei Ohtani. "We were all obsessed with [him] last year," saying she and others tuned into his social media.

Jessica also checked out global media to learn more about him. "I was looking at Japanese media. They were doing things like interviewing people he went to high school with, which we didn't get in Korean language media. It felt cool to feel like an insider." Jessica's interest in the LA Dodgers showcases another key dimension of The New Wide World of Sports: whereas in the past sports fans were often loyal to local players and teams, or national ones, today sports fandoms cross cultural lines, thanks to streaming.



Sports streaming has not just created new, cross-cultural fandoms, but a shared language connecting sports fans, wherever they may live and whatever language they may speak.



In fact, more than two-thirds of Global Sports Audiences (68%) do *not* consider themselves an exclusive fan to their local team, or the team that was geographically closest to them when they grew up [see Global Sports Fandom]. “I would actually argue there’s more American baseball fans than Korean baseball fans here,” Jessica told us. As testament to this, the Korean Dodgers community can be found on the streets, not just on social media. “After the Dodgers won the World Series, if I was walking down the street and I saw somebody wearing the hat, I would just go high-five them, it was an instant bond. We knew we spoke the same language.” In this way, **sports streaming has not just created new, cross-cultural fandoms, but a shared language connecting sports fans, wherever they may live and whatever language they may speak.**



“We made a carne asada and we stayed afterwards to enjoy each other’s company and talk about the game.”

David  
28, Guadalajara, Mexico



## Global Sports Fandom

Gone are the days when sports fans only rooted for the home team. With the rise of streaming and the Global Sports Streamer, it’s as likely that fans are faithful to their local team as they are to one in a different city, country, or even continent. This trend of various fandoms, local and otherwise, was consistent across geographic regions.

### Q:

Which of the following best describes your interest in your most watched sport?

► *Responses among Global Sports Fans, who represented 94% of all Global Audiences*

- 18%** **No Particular Team:** I’m interested in the sport and don’t have a particular interest in any one team
- 17%** **Not Local or Hometown Team:** I consider myself an exclusive fan to a team that’s not geographically close to me now, nor when I grew up
- 16%** **Both Local and Non-Local Team:** I am both a fan of a team geographically close to me as well as a team that is not
- 16%** **Several Teams:** I consider myself a fan of several teams and don’t have a preference for any particular team
- 16%** **Local Teams:** I consider myself an exclusive fan to the team that’s geographically closest to where I live
- 16%** **Hometown Team:** I consider myself an exclusive fan to the team that was geographically closest to where I grew up





It wasn't hard to find examples of sports fans around the globe who spoke this shared sports language and fit each of the Global Sports Fandom types. David, 28, of Guadalajara, Mexico, for example, "just likes basketball." He's in a basketball league that discusses plays that caught their attention and any games out of the ordinary. **While he follows the sport rather than a particular team, he notes that some of his favorite teams are from Denver and Minnesota—not Mexico.**

"I like to watch the Timberwolves a lot, I like to watch the Nuggets. I like a lot of stars like Ja Morant, like Anthony Edwards—young players that are doing like a new style of play."

While David's sports fandom is representative of his generation, Gen Z, not everything about the way he watches sports is entirely new. When the final Olympic basketball game between the U.S. and France was on, he met up with his brother and friends to watch the game from start to finish. "We made a carne asada and we stayed afterwards to enjoy each other's company and talk about the game." Sports fandom is both new but also not. It mixes cross-cultural viewing with classic sports experiences, video clips with full-length games. Or in Jessica's case, devotion to a singular team—albeit one on another continent.



“When you’re with a group of fans, you automatically are friends or brothers or sisters and [it happens] immediately. Those are your people, that’s your community.”

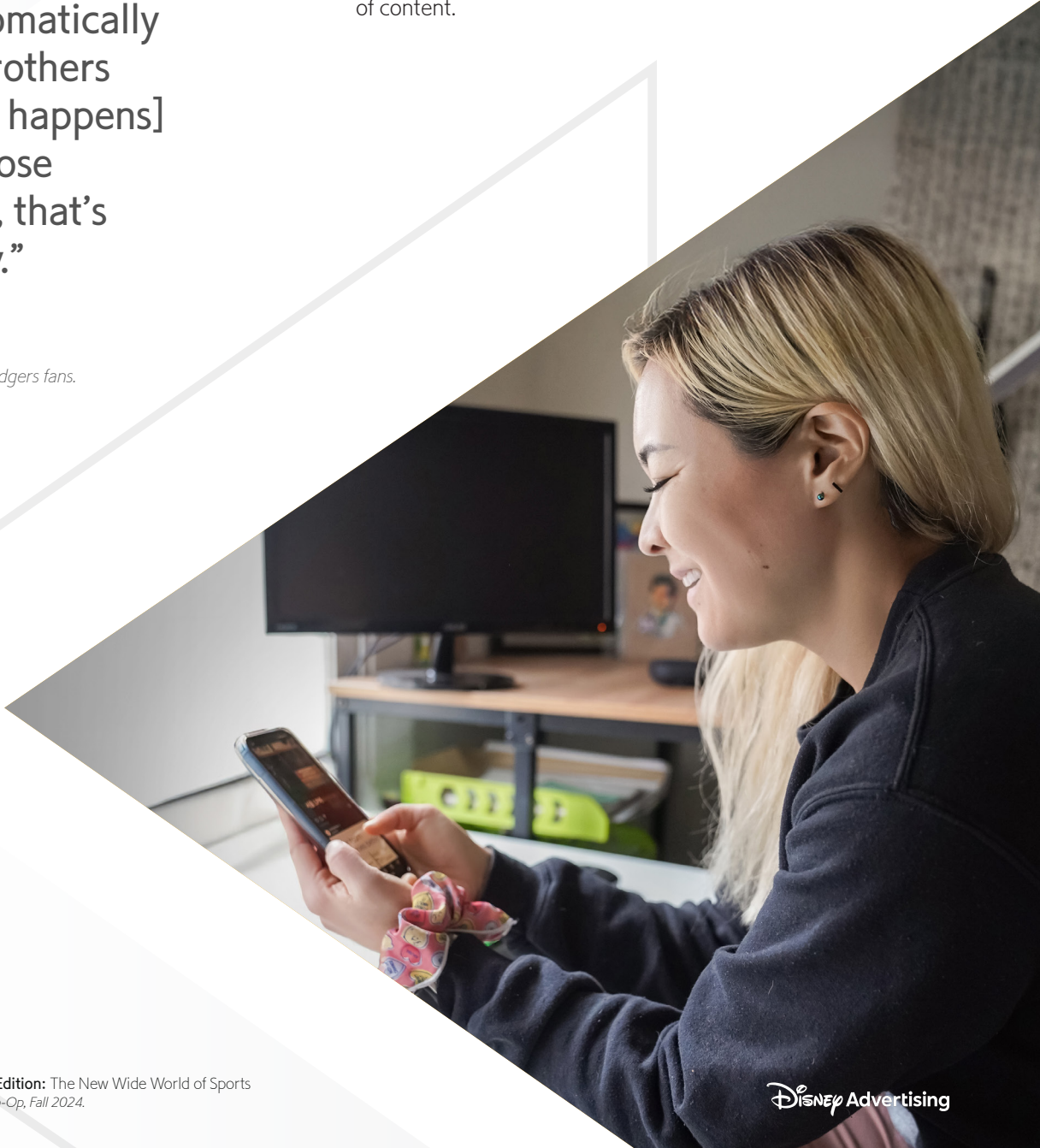
Jessica

41, Seoul, Korea

*On her camaraderie with Korean Dodgers fans.*



While Jessica watches across cultures, and leans heavily into social media as part of her sports fandom (see The Social Sports Sphere), she still appreciates something that sports fans have always loved: good old-fashioned camaraderie. “I connect with other fans on social media and in real life. When you’re with a group of fans, you automatically are friends or brothers or sisters and [it happens] immediately. Those are your people, that’s your community,” she explained. “I love that camaraderie. You just don’t get it anywhere else.” The takeaway is that The New Wide World of Sports embraces *all* sports experiences—across a variety of content.



## Global Sports Natives

While *The New Wide World of Sports* straddles generations, younger generations are naturally driving this trend because of their more global upbringing. Generation Z and Millennials came of age when global travel had mainstreamed and studying abroad felt like a college prerequisite. Jessica spent a year in LA, strengthening her ties to American baseball and the Dodgers. Similarly, Erin also studied abroad in the U.S. and cultivated a love of American football while there. “Living in the States, I got very immersed into the college football culture,” she told us, noting that she prefers American college football to the NFL, but still tunes into the Super Bowl “particularly to watch the halftime shows.”

Beyond college football, she and her partner are international sports enthusiasts. “My partner is very much into the English Premier League, he’s a big Liverpool fan. And then I’m from New Zealand, so All Blacks all the way.” Between the two of them, sports from four countries and three continents—North America, Europe, and Australia—form their regular sports streaming line-up.

Park, 32, of Seoul, Korea, also represents sports’ new globally-native fanbase. His global touchpoint isn’t a year abroad during college, but his partnership with his wife who is German, marking another way younger generations naturally have more exposure to global sports: cross-cultural relationships. It’s thanks to his wife that he developed a passion for F1 racing, a sport that is far from common in his country. “When I talk to Koreans about F1, most people don’t know much about it.” Park, however, watches every Grand Prix with his wife, who grew up with F1 as part of her culture.

## A Stream Down Memory Lane

In addition to connecting her to sports from other countries/cultures, streaming has helped Erin connect with previous generations of athletes and sports fans. Her grandfather was an Olympic runner and bronze medalist. When Erin found his winning race from two generations ago on a streaming service, it was an emotional experience. “I could just see him up on the podium. For me that evoked a lot of emotions around my background in running and tying me to that family legacy.”





## Universal Unifier

Park's experience watching the Grand Prix, or Erin watching the Super Bowl and Jessica's watching the World Series, marks another way younger generations are creating a wider world of sports. Because of a growing group of cross-cultural sports fans, big sporting events are getting bigger. Martin Queirolo, VP - Head of Marketing for Disney+ and Media Networks LATAM, says gathering to watch big sporting events is happening more than ever, even at a time when it would be just as easy to catch the game on social media. "Sports is a type of content that people are gathering to watch," noting that streaming big concert events are also fueling event viewing, but not to the extent that sports are. "The fact is that people are expecting experiences, and how we are able to amplify that main live experience is something that is very relevant. Here at The Walt Disney Company, **the inclusion of ESPN on our streaming service, Disney+, in the LATAM region has allowed us to improve the audience experience because we offer more than 2 thousand events a month, giving viewers the power of choice**" Queirolo added.

Take the Super Bowl, for example. Nielsen reported that Super Bowl LVIII drew nearly 124 million viewers from the U.S. plus another 50% of that total, or 62.5 million viewers, from outside the U.S.<sup>1</sup>. **This means that one-third of total Super Bowl viewers came from outside of America.**




**"Sports is a huge unifier."**

Juan Piñón, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication,  
New York University



**"The World Series is one of the most important streaming events of the year."**

Jessica  
41, Seoul, Korea  




## A Tale of Two Sports Experiences

The New Wide World of Sports is a multidimensional sports experience, where content on opposite ends of the sports viewing spectrum is viewed equally by fans. Highlights are as appealing as full-length games; and the human side of sports—like documentaries—are as popular as the analytical side of sports, like statistics on players and teams.

Q:

When it comes to your most watched sport, how interested are you in each of the following types of sports content?

► *Responses among Global Sports Fans*

**77%** **The full game or match:** Watching from start to finish

**76%** **Highlights:** Short clips of sports events

**67%** **Analysis** of player, team, coach or management performance or strategy

**67%** **Editorial, documentaries** or storytelling about players, teams, and coaches

## The Social Sports Sphere

The New Wide World of Sports isn't just about the wide range of what sports fans are watching—from baseball to motor racing—or the many continents they're streaming content from, but also **how they are watching it**. In the new world order of sports, user-generated video clips and live matches sit side-by-side; social media highlights and full-length games are viewed equally (see stats below); and podcasts, radio broadcasts, global events, niche documentaries, and classic sports viewing parties all work symbiotically to create a new and diverse sports engagement ecosystem.



For example, Facebook may have led Jessica to stream National Geographic's *Arctic Ascent with Alex Honnold*, but the relationship between scrolling and streaming runs in both directions. After watching the series, Jessica scraped social media for more about climber Alex Honnold.

**Social media not only helps Jessica learn about what her fellow climbing community is watching but also supplements what she streams.** Her obsession with Shohei Ohtani connected her with Korean fans in community bars and drove her to "claw at the end of the Internet to find some random clip about him during his day, or some Japanese documentary that doesn't have subtitles yet." Similarly, David turns to streaming and social media to catch content and clips that he missed. "I often see clips on social media about things that happened with players from press conferences, or highlights that were from games that, for whatever reason, I didn't get to see." **Not only does this content fill the gaps, it also amplifies big moments.** "Perhaps I did see [the sports moment], but clips are circulating constantly because they were special moments," he added.



"I watch a lot of sports video clips. I really like the raw interview clips and highlights that you can get on streaming platforms. I think it's interesting because [my sports viewing] is kind of a mishmash of going to social media and ESPN."

Jessica  
41, Seoul, Korea





**One of social media's biggest benefits is that it provides a longtail of content for sports enthusiasts, across many sports.**

In addition to rock climbing and baseball, Jessica also scours the internet for MMA, fighting, boxing, and triathlon footage—particularly when sports are off-season: “Once the season is over, we’re waiting three months or so [for the next season to start]. That’s when I’ll go and really look to fill that void with sports documentaries.” Enzy, 20, of Los Angeles, CA, has developed more interest in niche sports, thanks in part to social media. “Recently I’ve been getting into figure skating shorts. Also, dance battles,” they told us. Simon, 50, of London, U.K., is a classic football/soccer fan, but his wife likes adrenaline sports. A combination of streaming and social media gives her access to niche sports she wouldn’t otherwise be able to watch. “My wife always looks for that staggering high of human achievement. So, she’s streaming BMX, and skateboarding.” Simon reflected that this new access to niche sports has broadened their appeal. “I used to skate as a teen, so it is astonishing and it’s quite weird seeing [skating in that streaming] environment rather than it being an outcast thing.”



**“Streaming has changed the way I consume sports. You can revisit the match. That wasn’t a possibility before. Now you can watch practically any game at any time.”**

David  
28, Guadalajara, Mexico



## The Big Picture

Whether fans are connecting on social media, streaming live sports, or a combination of all three, the sports experience is being amplified by streaming, which brings diverse sports fans around the world together to experience the shared language, and emotions, of sports. To this last point, the emotional experience of sports fandom is why it resonates across cultures so easily. Empathy for an athlete, roller coaster ride of a match, “game day vibe” as Erin put it, or “real grief” over a loss, as Jessica reflected, bond fans. **The New Wide World of Sports is expanding the sports viewing experience and, in doing so, connecting the world to bring sports communities closer together.**



## Advertiser Takeaways



**There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ sports fan.** They are watching short and long, are fans of local and global teams, and are eager to tune into what’s on the field and off.



**Put your brand in the game.** Leverage the opportunity to showcase this global fandom and how brands can be a part of the story (such as through campaign creative, etc.)



**Surround the full sports experience.** Marketers and brands have the opportunity to align with a variety of sports content, not only the game itself.



**Connect with the complete athlete.** Bring to life the human side of athletes in sponsorships and campaigns; audiences want to see a 360 degree view of who athletes are.

For more information on Generation Stream: Global Edition, please visit <https://insights.disneyadvertising.com/generation-stream/global-edition/>

[1] Statista, 2025