



The sports fan engagement report 2025/2026 season

Sports fandom is always-on. So why isn't engagement?

Fans are calling out for a deeper connection
to their teams. And there's all to play for.



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Surpassing your fans' expectations?
It's all about teamwork

FOREWORD

The smart play for sports teams? Help fans to be fans.



By Ivan Ostojić

Like so many Red Star Belgrade supporters, I don't get to watch my team play as often as I'd like. But I'm always finding other ways to be a fan.

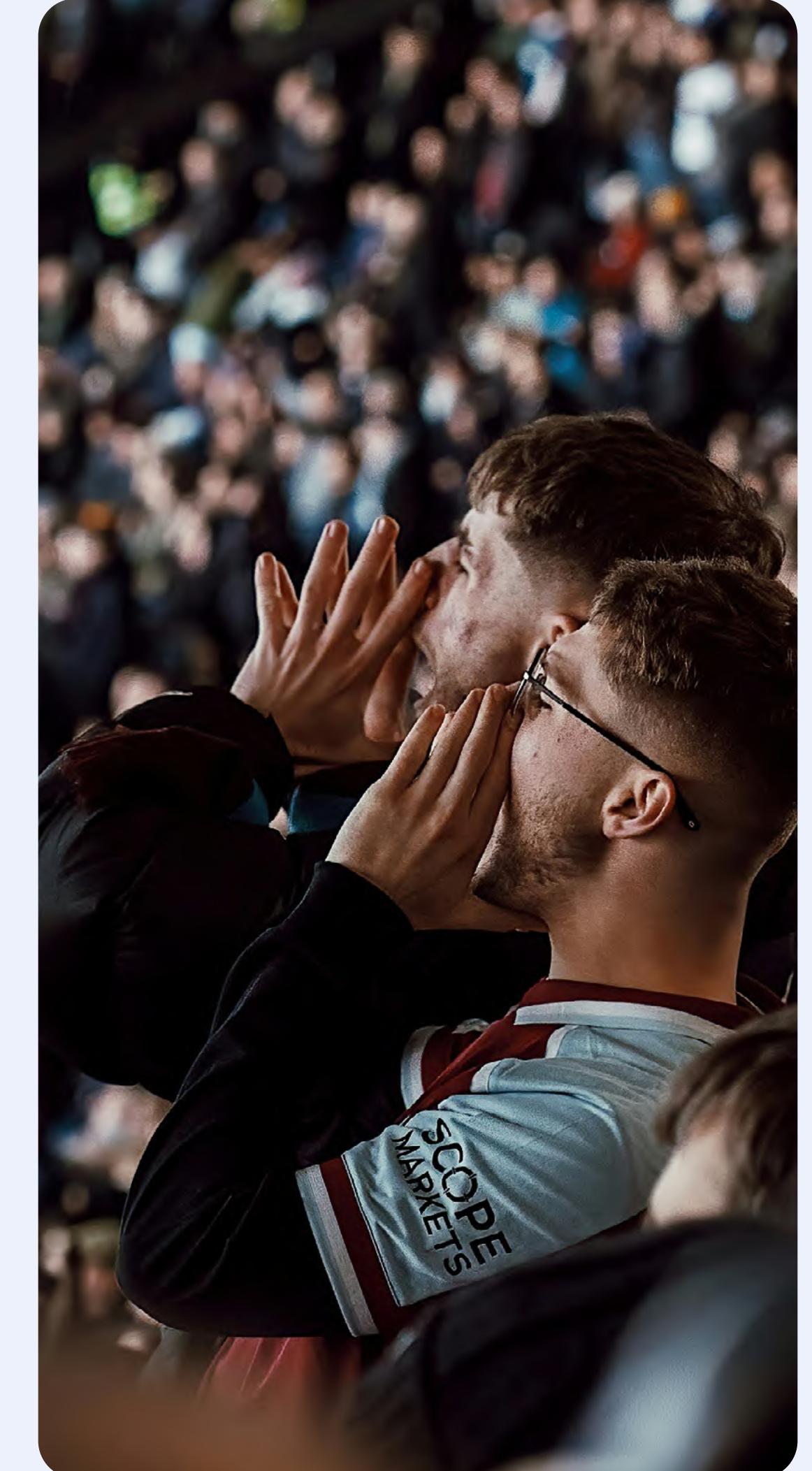
Every day of my life, I'm ready to devour the latest team news, or debate *that* decision with friends, family, and complete strangers who happen to be wearing my team's colours. Even if I can't cheer from the stands, I still want to feel part of that passionate community, all dreaming the same dream.

And this report suggests I'm far from alone. Today's sports fans can't always be in the crowd. Some can't even catch every game. But they want to connect to their team in other ways. They want to shape their own fan experience, see what's happening behind the scenes, and be actively engaged all year round, not just during the season.

“

Fans want to shape their own experience, see what's happening behind the scenes, and be actively engaged all year round, not just during the season.

It's a level of fan engagement that visionary sports teams are already pioneering. I'm seeing it, firsthand, through Infobip's partnership with MoneyGram Haas F1 Team. Together, we're finding ways to involve and connect fans like never before, from asking for their podium predictions, to testing their team knowledge and awarding exclusive prizes.



FOREWORD

The smart play for sports teams? Help fans to be fans.

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Fans are ready to invest even more, emotionally and financially, if teams rise to meet their engagement expectations.

Some consumer brands, those with sport in their DNA, are also showing the way. Instead of settling for a logo on a shirt, billboard, or screen, they're seizing the chance to help fans to play, win, and celebrate alongside the sporting heroes.

As you dive deeper into this report, you'll discover that sports teams have every reason to switch up their own fan engagement strategies.

For one thing, many fans are feeling sidelined. Most say price has become a barrier to following the game, and nearly half feel treated like a number, not a valued supporter.

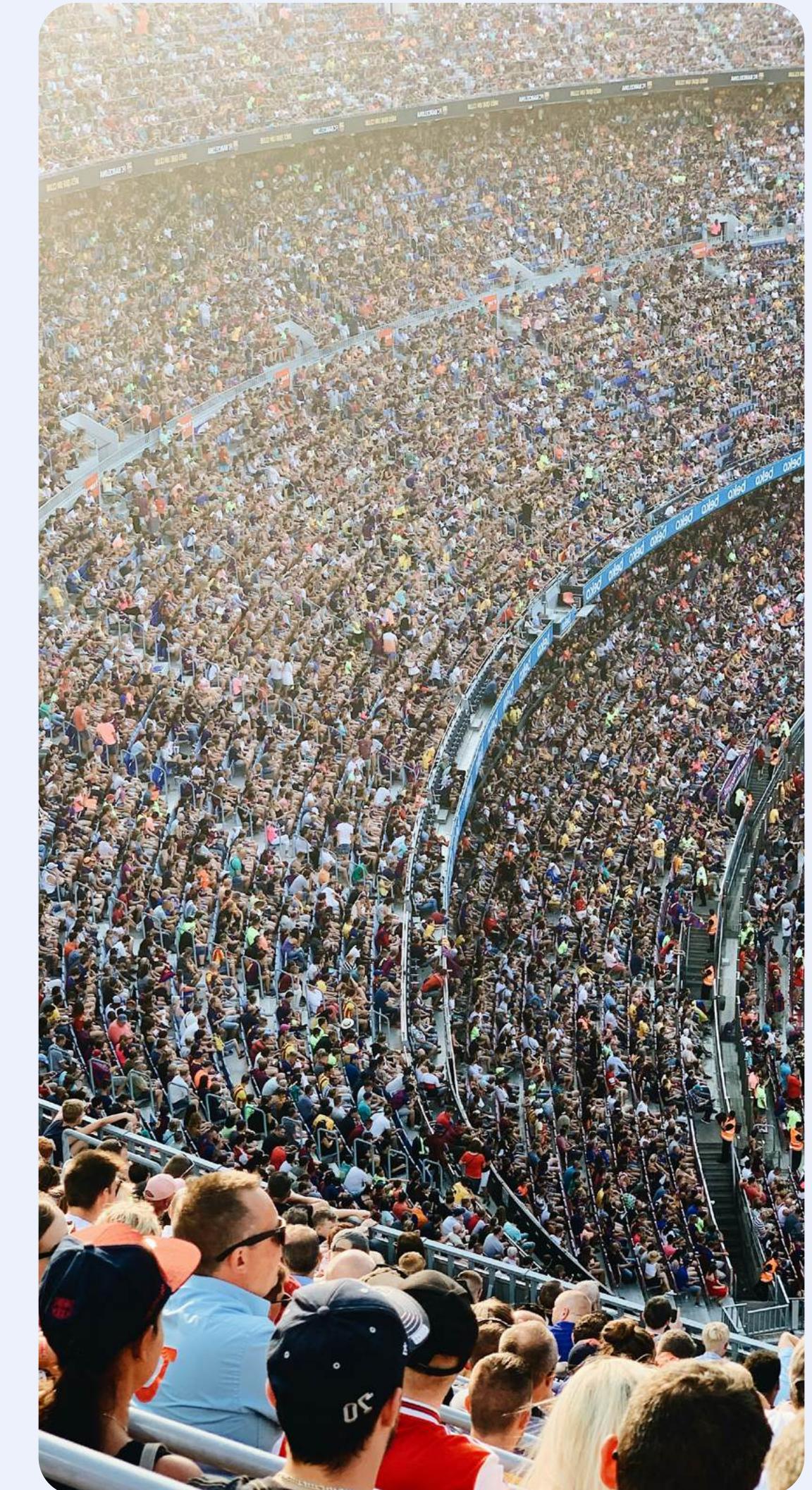
For another, many fans are ready to invest even more, emotionally and financially, if teams rise to meet their engagement expectations. A significant proportion say that, in return for feeling more valued, they'll buy more seats, shirts, and subscriptions.

And we all know how highly engaged fans can lift a team to greater heights. If a sports team is able to top the fan engagement league... well, it's never going to harm its chances of topping the actual one.

The future of fan engagement is suitably thrilling. And the game's already on.

Ivan Ostojić

Ivan Ostojić is Chief Business Officer at Infobip, responsible for setting company strategy and direction, driving new business growth, and leading strategic M&A. Ivan combines deep expertise in technology-driven business transformation with a lifelong passion for Serbian football team Red Star Belgrade.



SECTION 01

Methodology: Meet the fans



SECTION 01

Methodology:

Meet the fans

In July 2025, we interviewed 1,500 dedicated sports fans.

445 American football fans
all living in the US

650 football fans
all living in France, Germany, or the UK

205 baseball fans
all living in the US

200 cricket fans
all living in India

41%

are “every moment” fans

“I follow nearly every game, update, and piece of content related to my team. It’s a big part of my life.”

38%

are “loyal but busy” fans

“I support my team with a passion, even if I can’t always keep up with developments in real time.”

10%

are “emotional investor” fans

“I might not watch or follow every single game, but I’m still affected by losses and wins.”



SECTION 02

Why sports fans are frustrated



SECTION 02

Why sports fans are frustrated

Every sports fan wants to feel like they're part of the game. But right now, many are feeling overlooked, underwhelmed, and priced out.

Left on the sidelines

What snacks would you like in the stadium? Which of these jersey designs fills you with pride? These are exactly the kind of questions fans aren't being asked. Most fans haven't had a say in team decisions, or a chance to feed back, for at least two seasons.

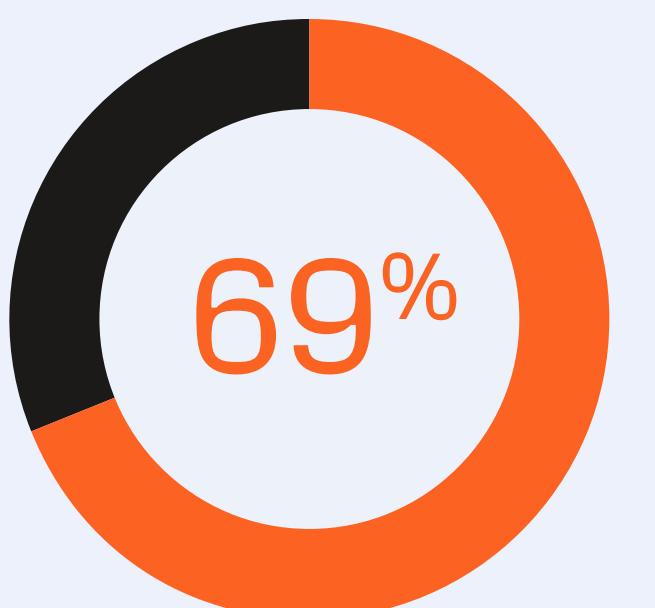
Most feel the board talks at them, not with them. And many feel they're treated less like a valued member of the fan community, and more like a number or customer.



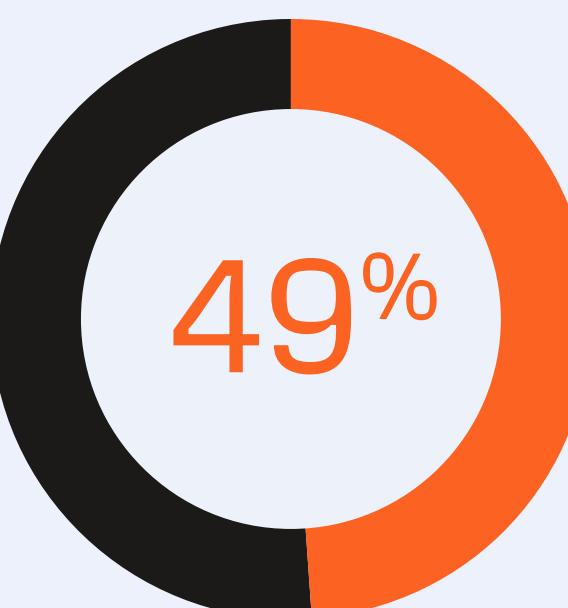
55% of fans feel let down by a lack of relevant content and communications



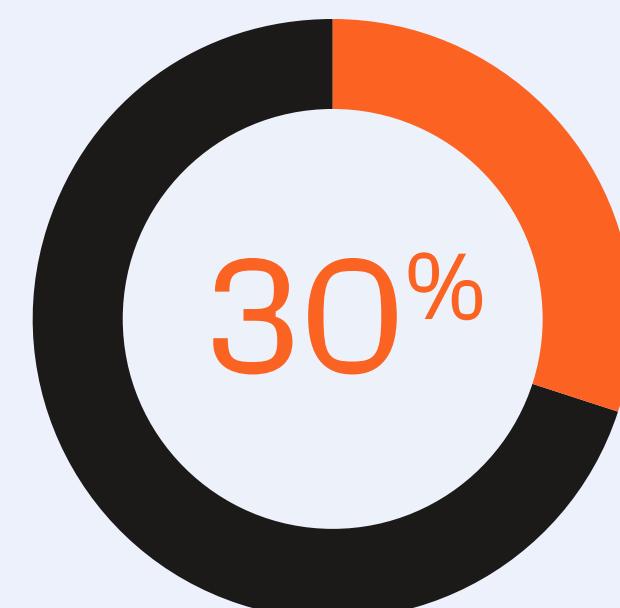
Why fans are feeling sidelined



haven't been asked for their opinion for at least two seasons



say they often feel like a number, not a valued supporter



say they're treated like a customer, not a member of a community

SECTION 02

Why sports fans are frustrated

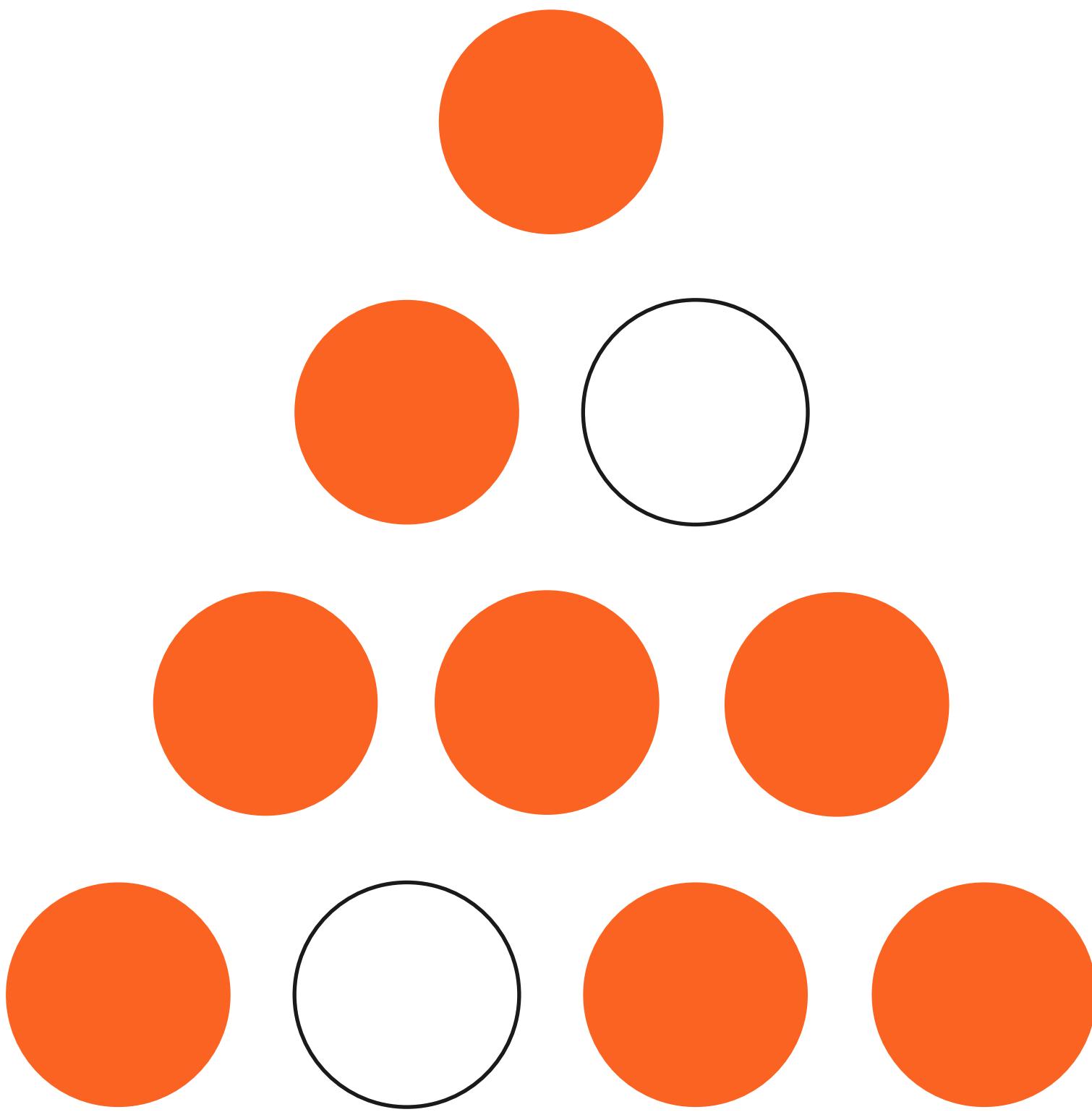
Underwhelmed by team communications

When sports teams do reach out, fans are often left far from impressed. Two thirds (66%) of fans say they're disappointed, for one reason or another, with their team's attempts to engage. Fans find them too transactional, too infrequent, and too generic. Most fans say they feel *let down* by their teams' content and communications.

Why fans are disappointed with their team's communications

- Communication feels purely commercial
- Fans like me don't get a say and are rarely invited to feed back
- There's a lack of free content
- The messages feel generic, not tailored to me
- My team doesn't send me content via messaging channels

8 out of 10 fans would like, or might like, more of a say in team decisions



SECTION 02

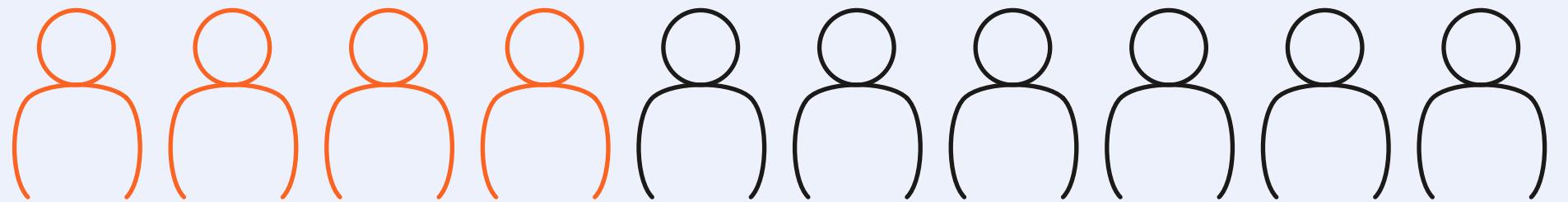
Why sports fans are frustrated

Priced out of the game

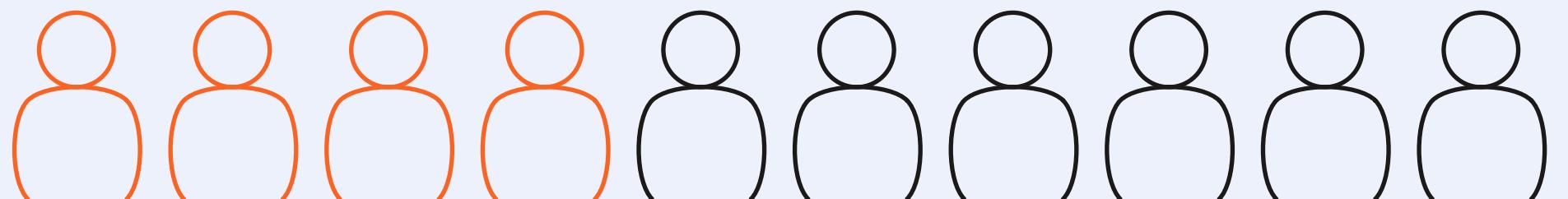
At the same time, the cost of fandom is driving a wedge between many fans and their teams. When we asked fans about their greatest frustrations, every table-topping issue was money-related.

At least one in three fans are unhappy with the cost of tickets or merchandise. Even more are frustrated by needing a subscription to cheer their team on from the couch. **Strikingly, 61% of fans feel they've been priced out of the game.**

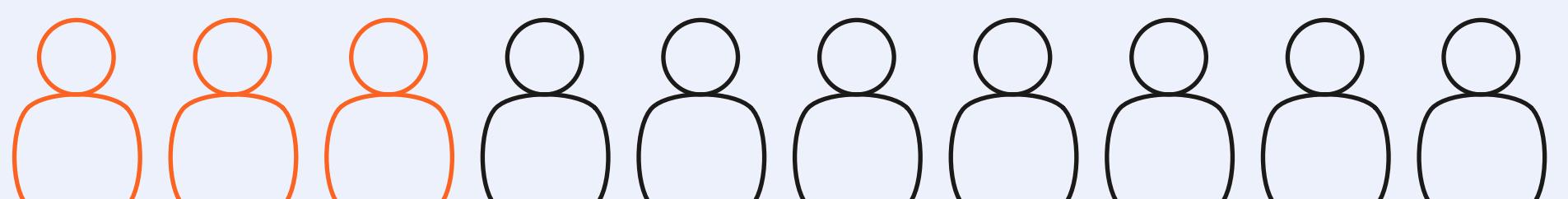
Fans' top frustrations are money-related



Watching my team on TV requires a subscription **41%**



Tickets are too expensive and hard to get **37%**



Merchandise (e.g. team kits) costs too much **33%**

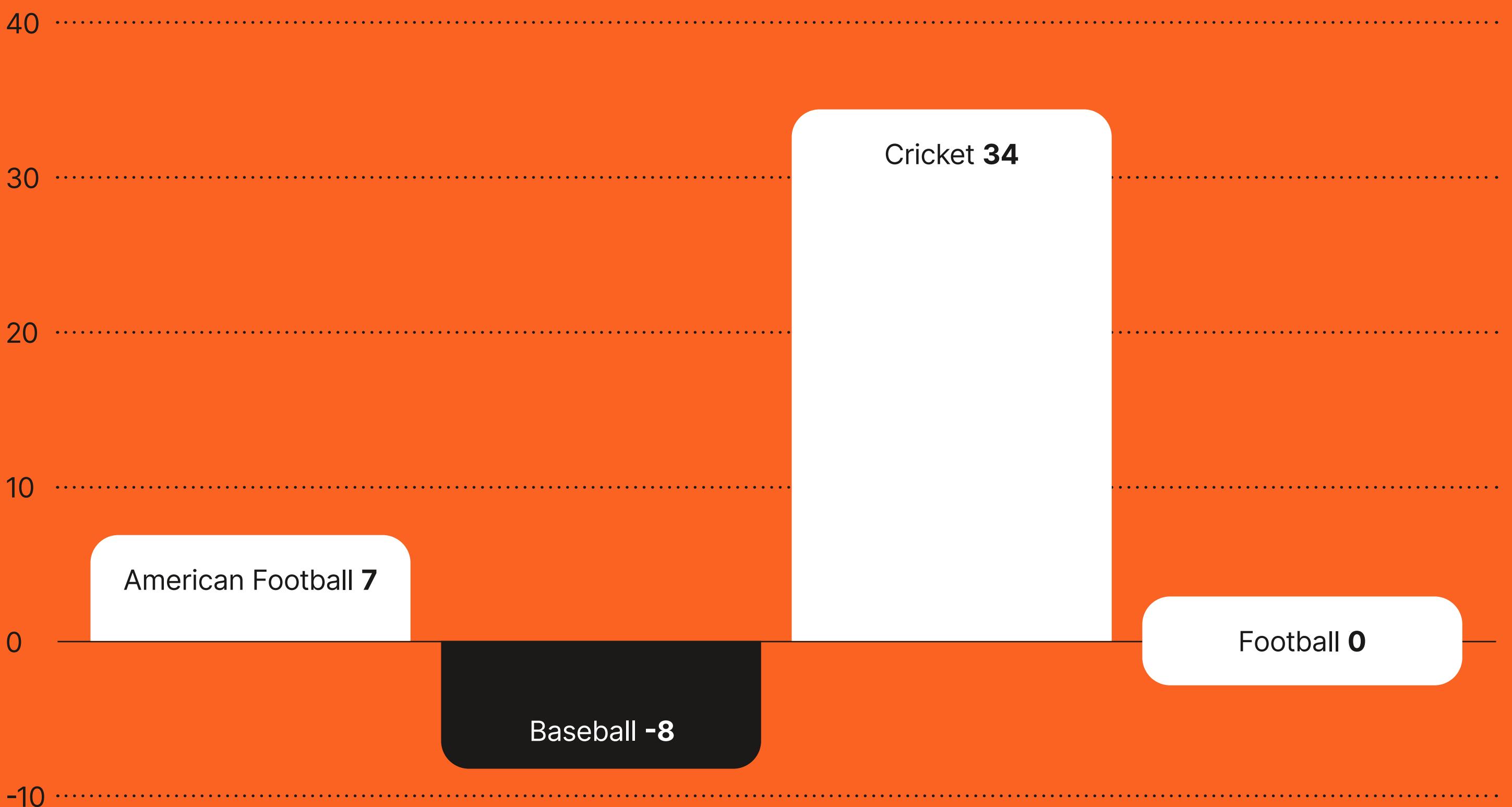
State of play: The digital experience

We asked fans a classic Net Promoter Score (NPS) question: "Based on your experience today, how likely are you to recommend your favorite team's digital fan experience to other supporters?"

The results should be a wake-up call, especially for baseball teams. With an NPS of -8, most baseball fans are unlikely to recommend their experience to others.



Based on your experience today, how likely are you to recommend your favorite team's digital fan experience to other supporters?



SECTION 03

What fans want from their teams



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What fans want from their teams

Fans' demands are very simple. They want to feel included and informed. All the time.

Fans want a higher-touch relationship

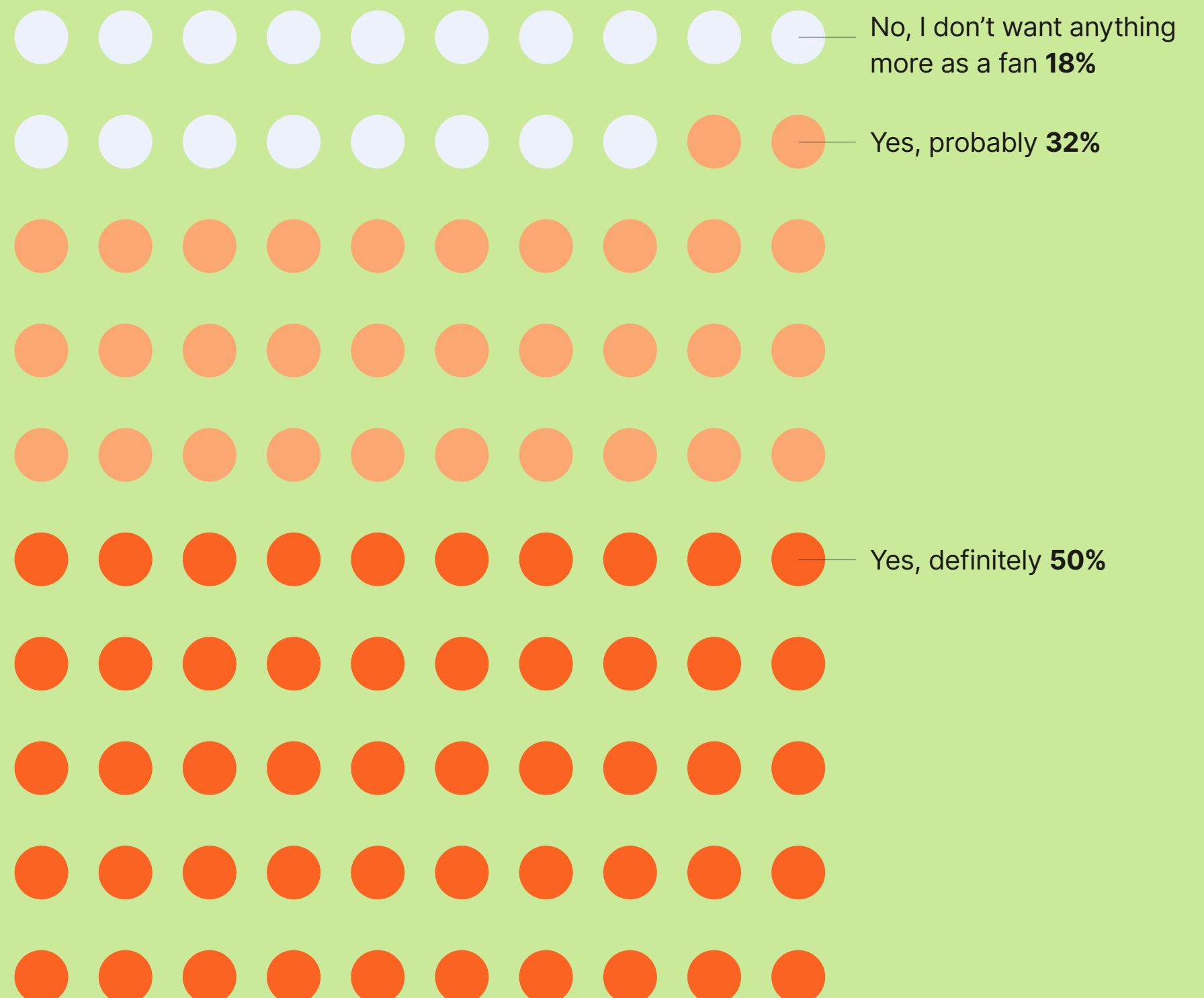
8 out of 10 fans want to feel more connected to their team. Getting updates on match day, or when there's a new shirt to buy... it isn't enough. Fans want their teams to involve and engage them in the moments in between the big events.

Most fans say sport has become "always on" and fan engagement should be too. They don't stop being fans when the season ends. And in the long months between seasons, fans can be even more grateful for team news and content. It's a chance to reconnect to their community and rekindle the conversation.

They'll thank teams that go even further, and actively support those fan-to-fan experiences. Two out of three fans say they would like to join a digital fan community.

Sports fans know these demands are reasonable. They're used to leading consumer brands keeping them in the loop with personalised communications, asking for their feedback, and connecting them to other customers through dedicated groups and forums.

82% of fans would like to feel more connected, and know more about what's going on with their team



SECTION 03

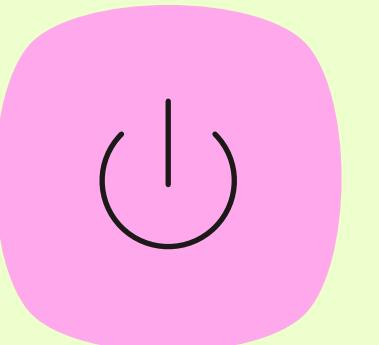
What fans want from their teams

Fans want content that creates connections

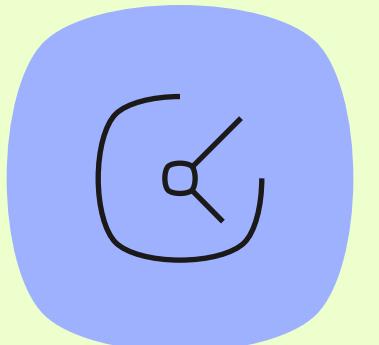
Fans are also calling for sports teams to up their content game. They see social-media-savvy players sharing inspirational moments, post-training videos, and fun polls. And they wonder why their team can't do the same. Many fans find personal stories inspiring. Seven out of ten say regular access to players and behind-the-scenes content would strengthen their connection to their team.

Nearly as many fans want content that lets them dive deeper into the technical weeds. And when it comes to breaking down last night's game, stat-by-stat and play-by-play, sports teams will always have a home advantage over the YouTubers doing the same.

7 out of 10 fans say



fan engagement needs to evolve, now sport is "always on"



they need to be involved in the stuff that happens between games

83%
feel inspired by personal player stories

would feel more connected, if they had regular access to players and behind-the-scenes content

70%
want more in-depth or technical content

68%
want more in-depth or technical content

SECTION 03

What fans want from their teams

Digital natives expect even more

This desire for a deeper connection and a different class of content is even stronger among fans under 35. Which means sports teams need to act fast. If they don't, the gap between fan expectations and fan experience is only going to widen.

All Fans

82%
96%

Fans under 35

Want to feel more connected

70%
81%

Would feel more connected with regular access to players and behind the scenes content

71%
81%

Want to be involved between games

73%
78%

Want more in-depth or technical content

66%
81%

Would join a digital fan community

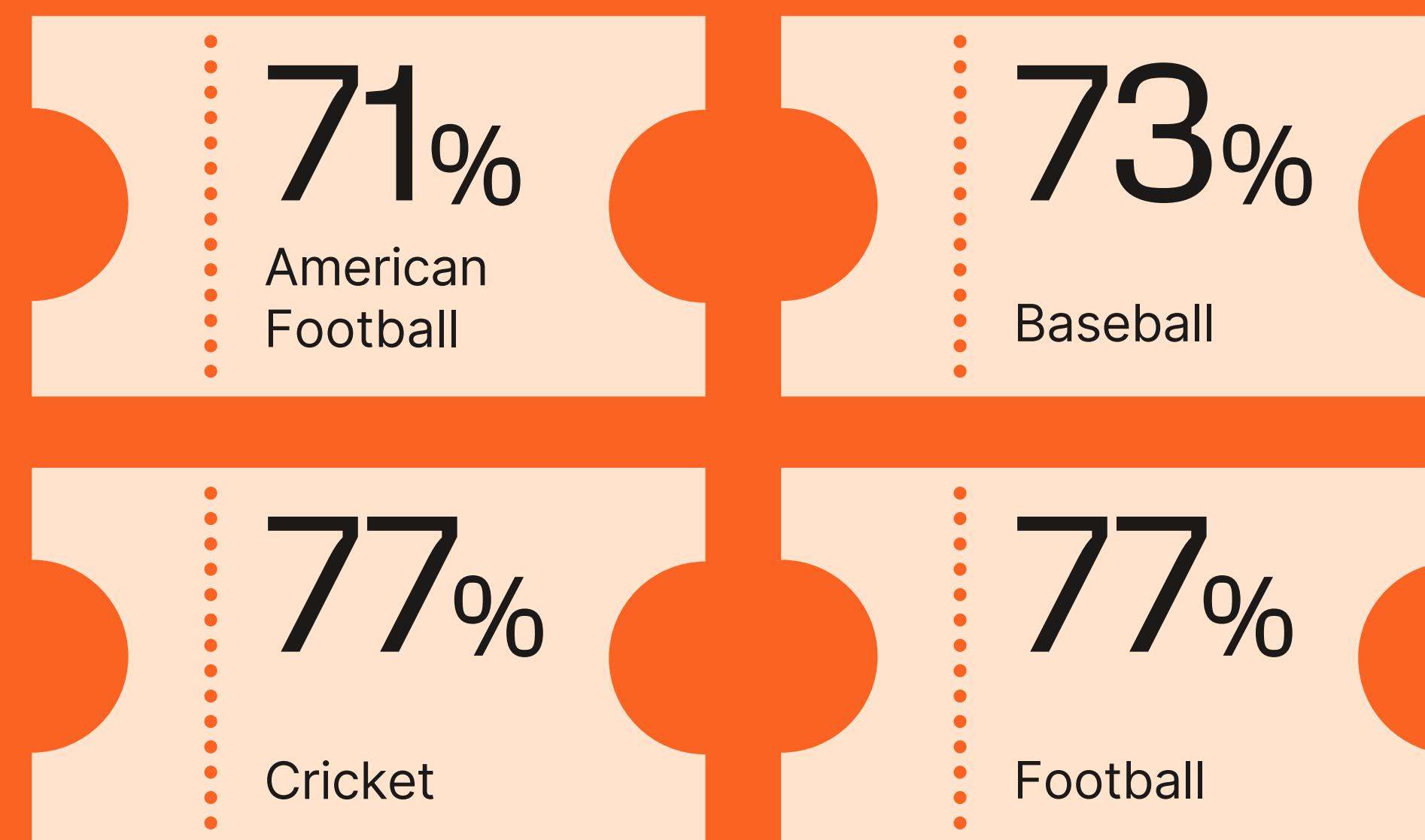
SECTION 03

What fans want from their teams

State of play: Prioritising local fans

Most sports fans (68%) also believe the experience of locals should be their teams' top priority. Even more believe that local or regular fans should have access to cheaper tickets than tourists. "Locals first" sentiment is especially strong among football and cricket fans.

I think local fans should be able to buy tickets more cheaply



SECTION 04

How fans will reward a better experience



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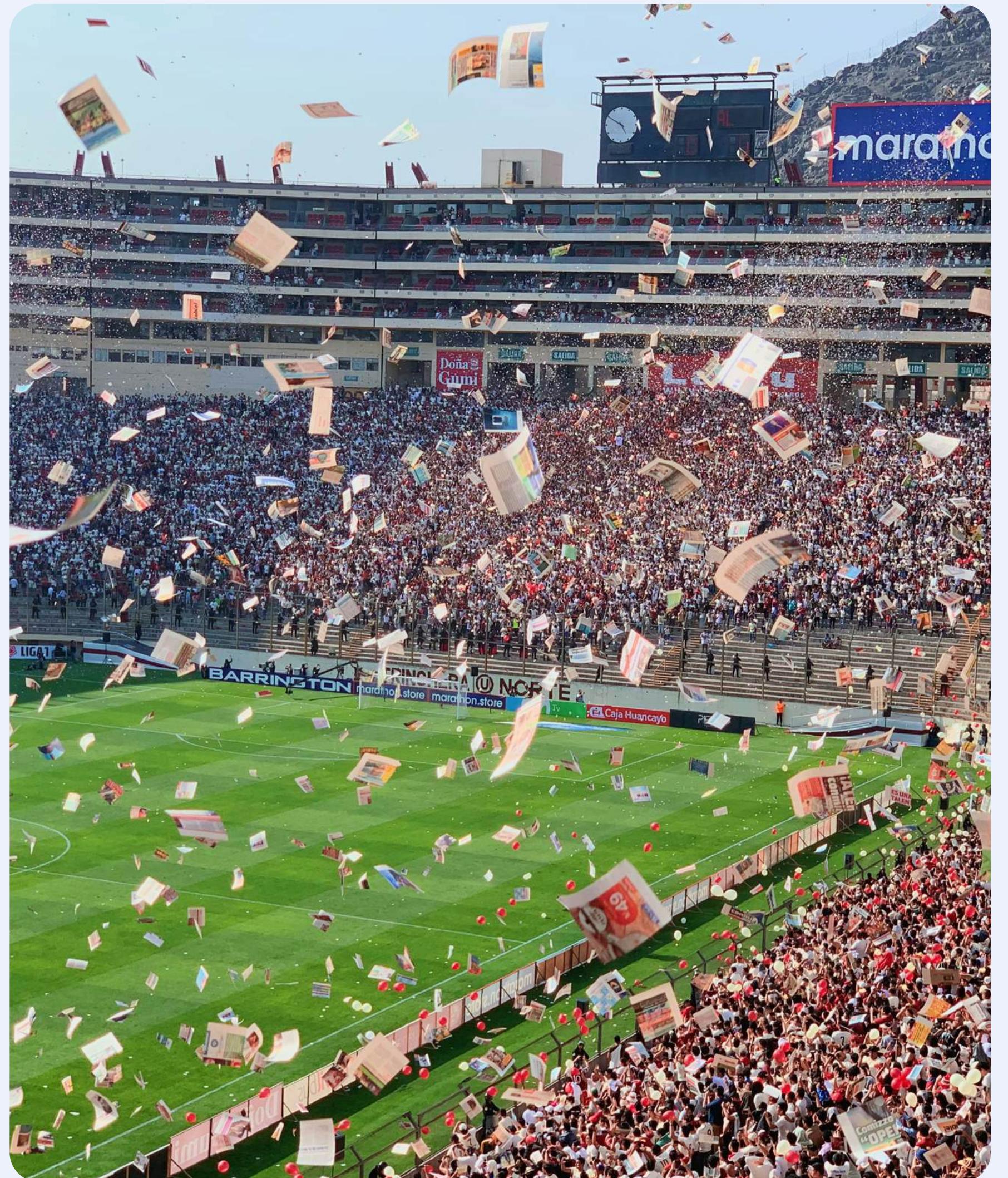
Here's the good news. If sports teams can reinvent the way they engage, a whole legion of fans are ready to reward them.

Sports fans are ready to care more

It seems unlikely, but it's true: some sports fans could devote even more of their hearts to their team. More than a quarter of fans say that if their team makes them feel more valued and connected, they'll be even more emotionally invested, and remain more loyal.

Sports fans are ready to spend more

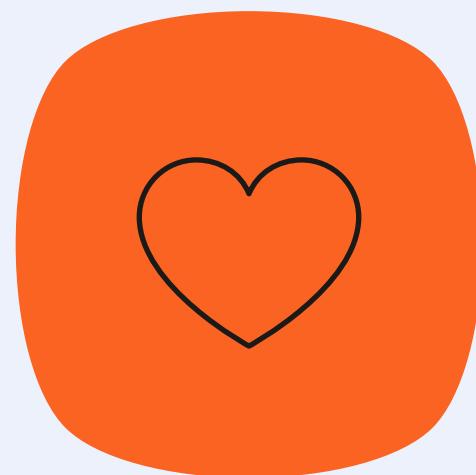
Fans may be financially stretched, but if they feel more valued and connected, many will open their wallets even wider. At least a quarter say they'll attend more games, buy more merchandise, and be more likely to pay for a subscription. Almost a third would be more inclined to usher new fans into the fold.



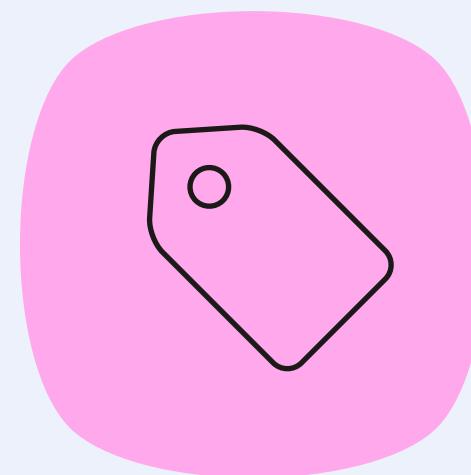
SECTION 04

How fans will reward a better experience

If teams made fans feel more valued and connected...



34% would be more emotionally invested



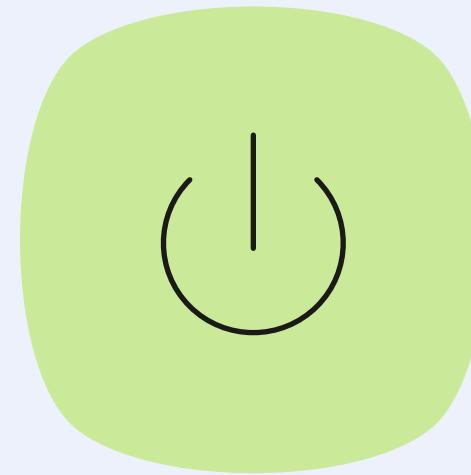
25% would buy more merchandise



34% would watch more games online or on TV



27% would attend more games in person



28% would be more likely to subscribe to a paid membership or fan service

SECTION 04

How fans will reward a better experience

State of play: Cricket fans

The Indian cricket fans we surveyed put fans of other sports to shame. As well as consuming more content about their teams, and being more likely to want a say in team decisions, one in three would buy more merchandise in return for a better relationship.

I would buy more merchandise if I felt more valued and connected

27%

American Football

26%

Baseball

34%

Cricket

22%

Football

SECTION 05

Four steps to reinventing fan engagement



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There's a huge amount any team can do, right now, to switch up and strengthen their fan engagement strategy. Here are four key steps, drawn from our own experience of partnering with visionary teams.

1. Make the most of messaging

Messaging is an incredibly powerful tool for sports teams. Whether their fans are most comfortable with Rich Communication Services (RCS), WhatsApp, or another app, messaging channels can offer a consistent, conversational connection. What's more, fans themselves are keen to use messaging for a wide variety of interactions, from getting early access to tickets, to feeding back on team decisions.

Who's leading the way?

Claro-sports

Claro Sports connects with Mexican sports fans over RCS and multiple messaging platforms during live sports events. The sports channel's chatbot, built by Infobip, gives fans access to real-time scores, interactive experiences, and updates on their favorite athletes.

Fans would like to use messaging for

Exclusive offers and discounts

77%

Early access to tickets or merchandise

74%

Exclusive behind-the-scenes content

70%

Voting or feeding back on team decisions

66%

Fan group chats with other supporters

59%

Getting team-related questions answered by a chatbot, 24/7

52%

SECTION 05

Four steps to reinventing fan engagement

2. Get to know fans, personally

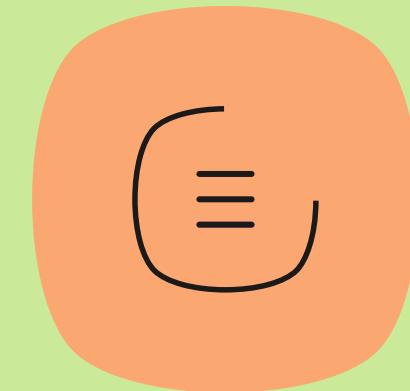
Understanding fans' interests, preferences, and behaviors is the key to thrilling them with timely, targeted communications and tailored experiences.

Sports teams need to build out their ability to create fan profiles, and successfully track engagement across all channels and touchpoints. Having a great customer data platform will be key.

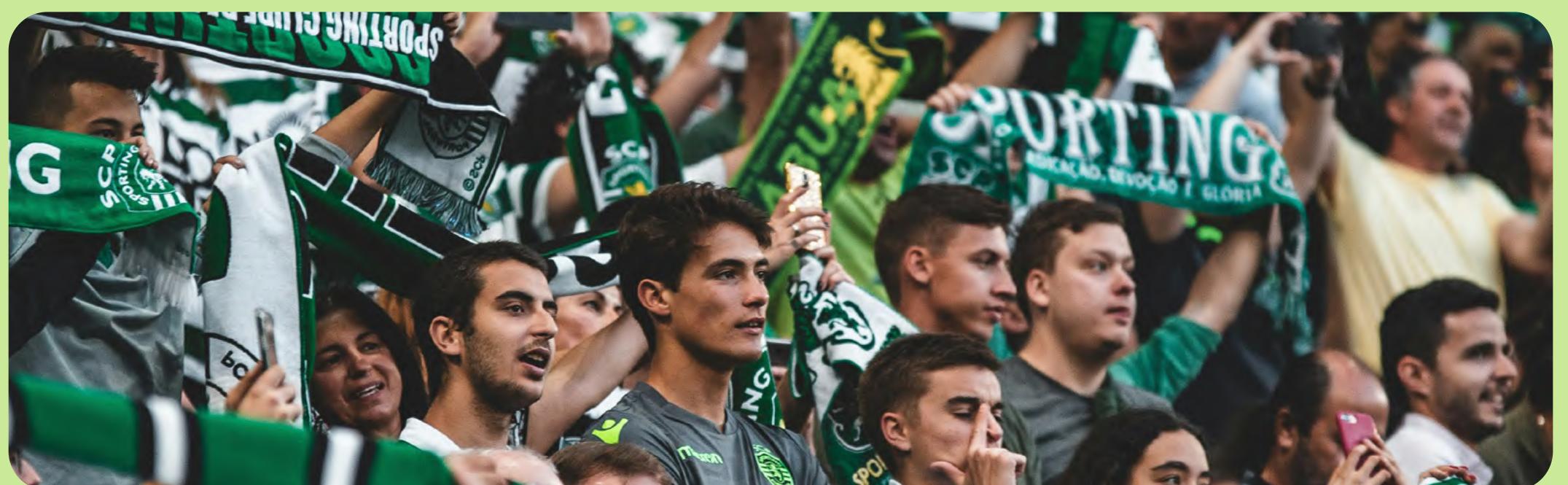
This level of insight, when combined with the right automation capabilities, unlocks completely new opportunities to engage. For example, if Rachel's team knows she has just streamed every post-game interview, they can personally send her exclusive behind-the-scenes content and even a discount code to celebrate her loyalty.

Who's leading the way?

The Los Angeles Rams launched the 2025–2026 season schedule to 10k+ fans who were given the opportunity to purchase game-day tickets via RCS. The team saw 60% growth in ticket sales and a 70% lift in engagement compared with traditional SMS.



78% of fans would like to receive exclusive content through messaging channels



SECTION 05

Four steps to reinventing fan engagement

3. Keep the conversation flowing

How do you hold continuous, personalized conversations, with countless fans? Some teams are already doing it, by pairing messaging channels up with AI. An AI-assistant can:

- Engage fans over channels like WhatsApp, RCS, and Viber
- Remember past interactions and content preferences
- Deliver news and updates based on their interests
- Provide perfectly timed team and match insights
- Let fans make purchases and claim rewards

Who's leading the way?

The Los Angeles Chargers are using Infobip's AI-driven chatbot technology to connect fans with the information they care about most, including game day updates, stadium details and player news.



78% of fans would like to get real-time updates through messaging channels



SECTION 05

Four steps to reinventing fan engagement

4. Gamify the fan experience

Fans like playing, too. And gamification can connect them not only to their team, but to each other. The best gamified experiences use technology in new and entertaining ways:

- **Trivia quizzes.** A chatbot-hosted quiz gives supporters a chance to test the depth of their devotion, and see where they rank among other fans.
- **Mascot selfies.** AI can put a team mascot into a fan's WhatsApp selfie. The fan gets a fun experience and some great content for their socials.
- **AR scavenger hunts.** Teams can use AR scavenger hunts to bring fans into their official stores, rewarding those who find every virtual token with a very real discount.

Who's leading the way?



The Moneygram Haas F1 Team has partnered with Infobip to create richer, more interactive fan journeys, combining WhatsApp and in-app messaging with the power of agentic AI. One great example? Inviting fans to compete in a chatbot-based quiz, and win exclusive, signed memorabilia.



74% of fans would like to enter contests and win prizes using messaging channels



CONCLUSION

Surpassing your
fans' expectations?
It's all about
teamwork.



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Surpassing your fans' expectations? It's all about teamwork.

To successfully transform fan engagement, sports teams will need to do what they do best: pull together the perfect combination of skills, equipment, and experience. A global communications partner should be one of their earliest signings.

Global communications partners can help sports teams to unify fan data, enable truly omnichannel engagement, and enhance fan interactions with AI and automation. With in-house conversational experience expertise, and the ability to implement solutions quickly, they empower teams to not only address engagement pain points, but create the kind of fresh, memorable journeys that make fans feel even closer to the game.



CONCLUSION

Surpassing
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The future of fan engagement

By Ivan Ostojić

"The future that sports fans want to see, a future defined by a closer, always-on, more conversational connection to their teams, can arrive very quickly. The technologies that enable personalized communications at scale have already been developed, proven, and refined in other industries.

In the next few years, we'll witness more collaborations between innovative sports teams, technology providers, and global communications platforms like ours. It's an exciting time not just for teams aiming to deepen fan engagement, but for fans eager to experience richer, more meaningful interactions."

Speak to our fan engagement experts

If you would like to find out more about engaging sports fans, drop us a line.

SPEAK TO AN EXPERT



The Infobip Advantage

[CONTACT US](#)

Global Reach and Local Presence

- 9,700+ Global connections
- Connect with over 7bn people and things
- Strong enterprise client base
- 75+ offices on 6 continents

Our local presence enables us to react faster and have everyday interactions with our customers, providing solutions in line with their needs, local requirements and based on proven global best practices.

Scalable, Fast and Flexible Solutions

- Best-in-class delivery rates
- High speed and reliability
- Low latency
- In-house developed platform

Our solutions are created to adapt to the constantly changing market and communication trends at speeds and levels of precision and personalization that only an in-house solution can offer.

Remarkable Customer Experience

- Technical expertise
- Solutions and CX consultancy
- Customer success management
- 24/7 support and network monitoring

We will help you to get up and running in no time, whether it's assisting with integrations, messaging best practices or solutions consultancy.

Own Infrastructure

- Locally available services
- Compliance to local regulations
- 40+ data centers worldwide

Our worldwide infrastructure easily scales horizontally, leveraging the hybrid cloud model to never run out of resources. Our built-in global compliance engine is constantly updated with the latest in-country regulations and operator requirements.



RCS Business Messaging Established Leader 2024
AIT Prevention Established Leader 2024
CPaaS Established Leader 2024



Gartner® Magic Quadrant™
for CPaaS 2024
Infobip is named a Leader



Infobip named to Fast Company's
Annual List of the World's
Most Innovative Companies of 2024



Metrigy CPaaS MetriRank
Infobip named as a top
CPaaS provider 2023, 2024



IDC MarketScape
CPaaS Leader 2021, 2023, 2025



Omdia Universe
CPaaS Leader 2022, 2023



One communication platform.
Billions of conversations.