

How Sports and the Big Screen Deliver Unique Advertising Opportunities



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Sports and cinema drive emotional experiences among communities of passionate viewers.

During an ADWEEK House Sports Summit panel co-hosted with Screenvision Media, Mark Stenberg, senior media reporter at ADWEEK, sat down with industry leaders to discuss why culturally relevant sports and moviegoing experiences are ideal settings for creating lasting brand impact.

Similarities in sports and cinema fandom

Kevin McGaw, SVP and head of marketing at Screenvision Media, a cinema advertising organization, began the discussion by sharing the numerous parallels between cinema and sports fandom.

“There are people who are huge fans of sports who wear jerseys and paint their faces. Moviegoers will wear costumes and paint their faces,” McGaw shared. “That communal experience you only get from sports and moviegoing.”

Using World Cup watch parties as an example, McGaw pointed out that consumers enjoy experiences more when they get to do them with fellow fans.

That’s precisely why Diageo, which includes spirit brands like Guinness, Johnny Walker, Smirnoff, and Don Julio, leans into sports marketing as a brand driver.

“If you think about a game, if you think about going to a stadium, if you think about going to a bar and restaurant to watch the World Cup, our products, more often than not, are already part of that experience,” explained Rick Pineda, VP of global sports at Diageo.

The goal is for Diageo brands to complement and enhance the sports-watching experience, not hijack it. “So, as people are experiencing this amazing moment in sports, we are along for the ride and are additive, not distracting or trying to interject into a place where we don’t belong,” said Pineda.

Likewise, Screenvision Media, which runs 20-minute shows that include regional and national advertising before feature films across 14,000 screens, has been experimenting with new interactive and immersive experiences before moviegoers tuck their phones away, shared McGaw. These experiences include using mobile phones to interact with on-screen trivia, QR codes, or shopability.

“We recognize that earlier on the show, folks are on their phone,” McGaw said. “How do we give opportunities for advertisers to be a part of that process as well?”

Cultural moment connections

The discussion shifted to explore the brand opportunities possible with the World Cup, as well as with award shows and big films.

Pineda shared that Diageo is the first-ever spirits partner for FIFA and they’ve run with it, creating tailored campaigns based on location. In Mexico, for example, they developed a huge campaign with Don Julio, including a limited-time Don Julio bottle that’s an homage to the World Cup trophy.

“People will pick the bottle up and showcase it, much like soccer players that win the trophy do at the end of the World Cup,” explained Pineda. “So, it’s about finding those moments of connection.”

McGaw agreed that there is power in community connection, sharing that Screenvision Media is leaning more toward in-person experiences as well, including recent watch parties for the BET Awards in three cities and product sampling with L’Oreal around The Devil Wears Prada 2 before and after the show.

“The experiential opportunity that cinema delivers for your creative—in addition to a 40-foot screen and surround sound—is very unique,” said McGaw. “It’s this opportunity for advertisers to have consumers not just experience their brand on a screen, but experience the brand in real life, in person, when they’re in an environment that is already leaning into being out more and more likely to shop before or after a movie.”

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