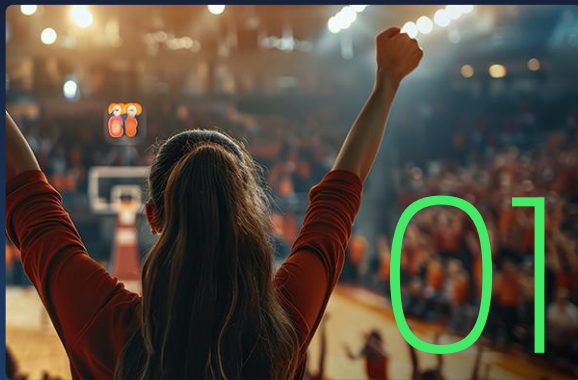


EXPERIENCE INTELLIGENCE SPORTS EDITION

BY GPJ

May 2025

Blending purpose with presence in sports sponsorship is a winning formula. In 2025, brands are shifting toward more personalised and community-driven sports experiences, strategically leveraging premium B2B hospitality at marquee events, immersive activations in niche sports, and dynamic sports tourism strategies.



B2B marketers are moving from the boardroom to the ball game



Non-endemic brands are building equity through niche sports partnerships



Sports tourism is boxing out local fans—and brands are following suit



GEORGE P. JOHNSON
experience marketing

If you have questions about any of this content, or would like to learn more, please reach out to your GPJ account representative or [contact us](#).





B2B marketers are moving from the boardroom to the ball game

B2B marketers are turning to sports as they seek to engage and delight the next generation of leaders.

The rising demand for leisure experiences in business settings, particularly among [young](#) professionals, is driving the expansion of high-end hospitality at major sporting events. Conversely, this is driving the expansion of sports activations at B2B conferences. With Gen Z and Millennials [increasingly](#) in decision-making positions, brands are investing in memorable experiences aligned with their lifestyles and interests to win consumers over.

At a baseline, B2B brands are amplifying their partnerships with sports organisations to earn cultural currency, like [Formula One and Google Cloud](#), [Salesforce's](#) partnership with the Indiana Fever and the alliance between [IBM and the UFC](#) and [Ferrari](#). However, these brands aren't just slapping logos on stadiums, they're bringing these partnerships to life at their own events. For example, [Microsoft](#) has leveraged its Formula 1 partnership showcasing Azure-powered analytics at their largest events.

Additionally, brands are buying out super-premium, costly suites at events like the [NCAA Final Four](#) and [Super Bowl](#), and new NFL stadiums are [selling out luxury suites months ahead of projections](#). Hence, it's not just about the logos or VIP access. Whether you're in a suite, in the convention center, or on the sidelines, ensure that you're designing compelling, interactive stories that heighten emotions and shift perceptions.



Key Takeaway | Engage your strategy teams to help select, design, and [measure](#) experiences that boost brand relevance, build trust with your clients, and ultimately drive long-term loyalty.



Non-endemic brands

are building equity through niche sports partnerships

Unlikely players are driving loyalty and leads in fast-growing sports communities via access to playful experiences.

Brands are strategically [investing](#) in niche sports platforms, including increasingly popular activities like [pickleball](#) and [cricket](#), as well as emerging ones like [drone racing](#). They're using a mix of [permanent facilities](#), [innovative one-off activations](#), and prominent [celebrity](#) partnerships to create measurable outcomes in awareness, brand affinity and lead generation.

For example, [Smirnoff](#)'s pop-up pickleball activation engaged consumers through immersive brand experiences, boosting buzz and product trials. Similarly, [DP World](#) deepened and expanded its global sports presence by hosting cricket tournaments and sponsoring high-profile cricket events. [Volkswagen](#) sponsored the World Urban Games in 2023 by providing transportation solutions for athletes and officials, enhancing brand visibility among urban sports communities. Building on this trend, [Sichuan Airlines](#) elevated the World Games experience by transporting athletes, officials and fans with discounted fares and exclusive access to ancillary experiences, significantly increasing audience engagement and brand perception.



Key Takeaway | First-mover brands that actively engage with these emerging communities can exponentially boost equity and advocacy as they grow. Consider which platforms make sense for your brand to connect with, and explore how you can make an impact.



Sports tourism is boxing out local fans—and brands are following suit

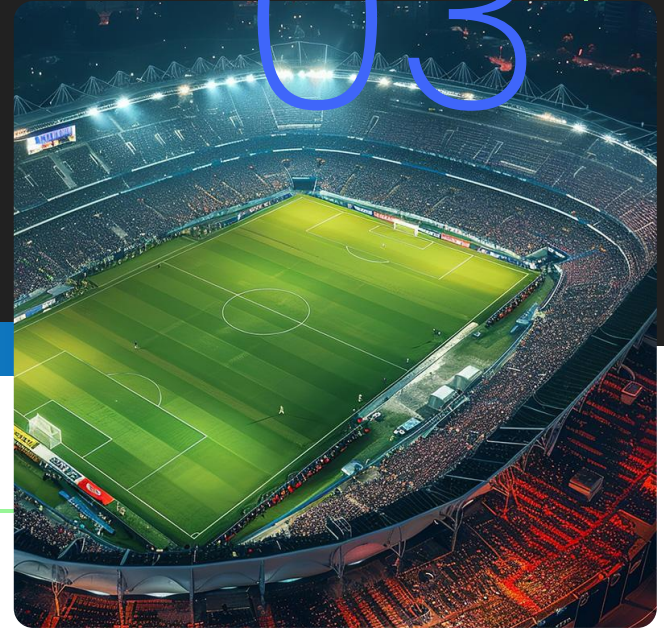
Sports travel is booming, reshaping fan experiences in and outside of the stadium. Brands are capitalising on these shifting dynamics.

Globally, sports tourism is growing at [17.5% annually](#), [largely](#) driven by millennial and older Gen Z fans. U.S.-hosted events like the [ICC Cricket World Cup T20](#) and high-profile [soccer friendlies](#) continue to attract global audiences and foster cross-border sponsorship deals—already driving significant travel interest ahead of the [2026 FIFA World Cup](#) and [2028 LA Olympics](#).

On one hand, brands are capitalising on sports tourism's growth by appealing to international audiences. For example, U.S. tourism brands are [partnering](#) with franchises abroad to offer bespoke experiences to travelers. Sports influencers are [curating](#) travel recommendations around big matchups. Even stadiums and local fan group organisers are making adjustments—like [multilingual stadium tours](#)—to appeal to international guests.

Meanwhile, [rising ticket prices](#) are pricing out local fans and driving them to fan experiences outside the stadium instead. This shift is evident in increased attendance at events like [Super Bowl watch parties](#) and the [Australian Open](#)'s popular satellite fan activations, offering communities and sponsors an adjacent view.

Key Takeaway | Brands should proactively pursue both community-oriented and international sports sponsorship opportunities, tailoring experiences differently to local and tourist audiences to drive meaningful engagement.

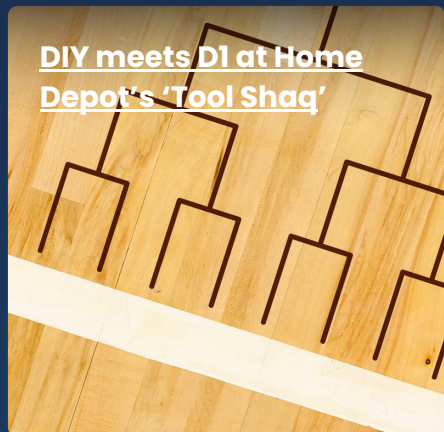




OUT-THERE EXPERIENCES

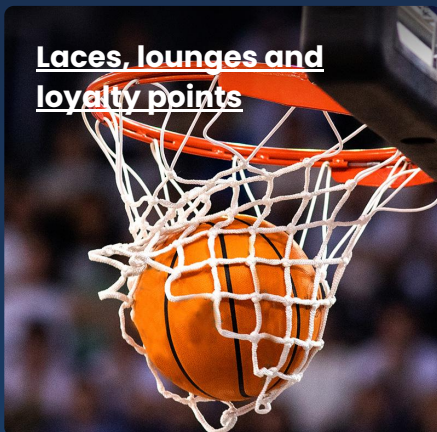
People, brands and marketers continue to push the boundaries of physical and digital experiences, with new and creative executions popping up across the globe.

DIY meets D1 at Home Depot's 'Tool Shaq'



This NCAA Final Four pop-up turned up the March Madness with a hologram Shaq, garden games, and bracket-inspired fun.

Laces, lounges and loyalty points



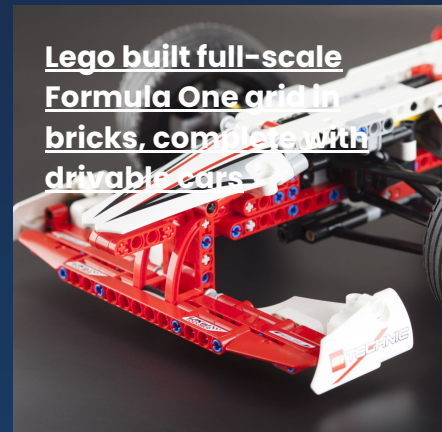
From fresh sneaker shines and charm swaps to free points—Marriott Bonvoy turns game-day rituals into VIP rewards.

Where the 'dinks' are cold and the drinks are cooler



Corona Premier and Saweetie served up pickleball social hour with custom gear, signature drinks, and laid-back matches in Hell's Kitchen.

Lego built full-scale Formula One grid in bricks, complete with drivable cars



As part of a multi-year global partnership with Formula One, Lego debuted 10 drivable, team-branded cars during the Drivers' Parade—built from over 400,000 bricks and engineered to hit the track.