

FOX Sports FIFA

Problem

How can FOX Sports overcome numerous challenges ahead of the 2018 FIFA World Cup?

Solution

By highlighting premier players and teams in attempt to hijack sports fans' morning routines with early soccer matches.



Background

As America's top-rated network for sports, FOX Sports is no stranger to major championship events (Super Bowl, World Series, MLS Cup). Even with that rich background, the global phenomenon that is the FIFA World Cup™, posed three tremendous challenges to delivering viewership success throughout a month long, multiple match per day timeframe. The US failed to qualify for this FIFA World Cup™. This can't be understated, this was the first time in 30 years that the US didn't qualify which meant that this year's tournament would miss the groundswell of nationalism and excitement that had punctuated past tournaments. Secondly, The FIFA World Cup™ was in Russia, a 7-12 hour time zone difference (depending on your coast) meaning that matches would start as early as 5A PT / 8A ET, a difficult time to drive ratings. And finally, 2018 was the first Men's FIFA World Cup™ ever broadcast by FOX Sports. Plus, fractured viewing habits in the US meant that there were both awareness and association issues to overcome.

Objective

While challenges persisted, the FOX Sports business objectives of driving tune-in to all 64 matches of the FIFA World Cup™ across FOX Sports cross media platforms were imperative. To make that happen, FOX Sports had to speak to the right target, with the right message, delivered in the right way. We curated two targets which we believe brought the scale right mindset to drive viewership. The "Core Soccer Fan", watchers of club and international soccer, to whom, soccer is more than a sport, they live it, breathe it, and will engage with anyone that will listen. These are the evangelists who need to know when and where to watch. The "General Sports Fan", are watchers of multiple live sports per week across all major leagues, enthusiastically devoted to their favorite teams, and love sports in general. These are fans that would have been easier to convert if the US had made it, however would be swept up in the excitement of the World's tournament through communication of superstars, super teams and super highlights. These targets consume both traditional and digital media and represent a younger, more cosmopolitan demo than other sports. To that last point, we identified six core markets which we believed were opportunity markets, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, and Washington DC were selected due to their high concentration of both core soccer and general sports TV watchers. In these markets, we believed a heavy up in TV, Radio and most importantly outdoor messaging would hammer home the communication message, drive excitement/word of mouth, and ultimately, drive views.

Strategy

Creative worked to communicate the "why you should watch" by highlighting international superstars and super teams, while the media plan was built to deliver a simple overarching strategy of intercepting the morning routine to remind potential viewers that the World Cup is on early, so turn beer into breakfast and tune in. We accomplished this strategy across all media platforms, however Outdoor worked especially well as an always on, persis-



tent awareness driver through the tournament. Utilizing the Posterscope proprietary tool, The Outdoor Consumer Survey, we understood which formats stood out to our core audiences. Traditional formats such as bulletins, bus, and transit shelters were smart formats that propelled FIFA World Cup™ creative to broad awareness. Jumping out at us through the research though, was the Digital OOH format. Through Digital boards, we could utilize dynamic content to increase not just the noticeability of an ad, but also its engagement with an audience. Dynamic Digital OOH allowed us to change messaging daily to ensure that all 64 matches were given awareness. General Sports fans wanted to be on the forefront of scores, results and social zeitgeist. Core soccer fans wanted to see when the games are live, scores as they happen and highlights. Dynamic Digital OOH delivered both. Layering the more traditional, large formats of static boards with the dynamic nature of the digital boards fit the strategy perfectly. We intercepted the morning routine during the group stage and knockout rounds of the FIFA World Cup™, reminding potential viewers that the matches were on, and they were on FOX. Specifically, we delivered the following impressions and reach in our opportunity markets (Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Washington D.C.). Through Posterscope's award winning platform Liveposter, we rotated awareness creative showing superstars of the FIFA World Cup™ (Messi, Ronaldo, Neymar, Kane, Chicharito), a schedule of the days matches, a countdown to each match, real-time scores while matches were played and even uploaded a video highlight within 30 minutes of the end of the match! In total, hundreds of pieces of creative onto the boards activated almost every hour across the tournament. With full match viewing spaces, working in partnership with JCDecaux, we created first-of-its-kind activation in NY at the Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT; we literally built a new activation space where none existed). The quintessential interception of a morning habit, FOX Sports took over the balcony in the main walkway of the one of the busiest and most diverse transit hubs in the US. In that space, we created a viewing area where interested commuters could stop and take in the matches as they happened. During non-match times, schedules and awareness creative was rotated to keep impressions rolling all day. A second, extremely press worthy viewing space was in Times Square. Partnering with Silvercast, FOX Sports showed Spain v. Portugal, the first key match of the FIFA World Cup™, as well as the France v. Belgium semifinal on their massive Megazilla screen to a captivated live crowd. So successful was the activation, that the NYPD were considering crowd control for the event as the numbers swelled and swelled. The activation garnered thousands of social mentions, made local and national news and even made it live on the TV broadcast in Russia. Large format bus ultra super kings were always moving massive coverage in a key opportunity market that happens to be the second largest DMA in the US, bus ultra super kings gave a platform to showcase five of the biggest names in world soccer (Messi, Ronaldo, Neymar, Kane, Chicharito) promoting awareness and association with FOX Sports and the FIFA World Cup™.



Plan Details

Markets: Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Washington DC

Flight Dates: June 2018 - July 2018

OOH Formats Used: Liveposter Platform

Target Audience: A18-49, Core Soccer Fans, General Sports Fans

Results

Despite the challenges faced, US not qualifying, Russian time zones, and network confusion, the FIFA World Cup



campaign achieved business goals using Outdoor as a key piece of the media mix. These following news pieces punctuate the revenue and viewership successes. Fox Sports says its World Cup has been an Ad Revenue success, even without the U.S. Team. FOX scores most-watched day of FIFA World Cup™ Quarterfinals in three decades, Croatia's dramatic win over Russia averages more than 6 million viewers, and most-watched quarter-final match in English or Spanish since at Least 1990, including U.S. matches. Not included in the article, but we were able to make four of our six opportunity markets, those markets covered in the outdoor plan, rank in the top 10 of all local metered markets in the tournament. Brazil-Mexico is top authenticated streaming event in FOX Sports History, match peaks at more than 5 million TV viewers.



Testimonials

Whit Haskel, SVP of Brand & Consumer Marketing at Fox Sports: “This is a visible manifestation of cutting edge tech, smart strategy, compelling creative, and teamwork. The press and social buzz spoke for themselves as a testament to the campaign success.” Robert Gottlieb, EVP of Marketing at Fox Sports noted that the OOH campaign was exceptional, with attention being called out to the Digital OOH element. As quoted in AdWeek, Gottlieb explained that “being able to talk to commuters as they’re going into work each morning, especially on the East Coast, is really important to our tactics.”