

LEVERAGING IMMERSIVE DIGITAL

TO DRIVE NEW SPORTS REVENUE STREAMS

Opportunities now and a strategy for the future.

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WHERES THE OPPORTUNITY?



There is no doubt that COVID-19 will continue to haunt live sporting events into 2021, dramatically reducing the engagement and enjoyment of fans and threatening the future of sports organisations. However, the current context has only highlighted how important it is to reimagine the fan/club relationship as well as sponsorship activation. Innovative ways such as using data to share interesting statistics to fans, personalised and curated content and employing chat boxes for targeted promotions and merchandise, as well as athletes talking directly to their fans, are helping with this reinvention.

In this series, we will show the importance of focusing on unlocking the power of technologies to build a two-way relationship with fans and drive revenue; digital channels, streaming platforms, content and AR and VR solutions, even artificial intelligence, all employed to connect the digital with the physical whilst placing the fan experience at the very heart.



One of the biggest sources of alternative revenue for sports organisations is data monetisation, particularly in the areas of fan engagement, player and team performance. Identifying different fan-engagement "zones" through specific value-added incentives, including social media, through the website or store, via in-game merchandise offers, and by using hyper-personalised content and real-time games and scoreboards with prizes, are all options.

POWER OF DATA

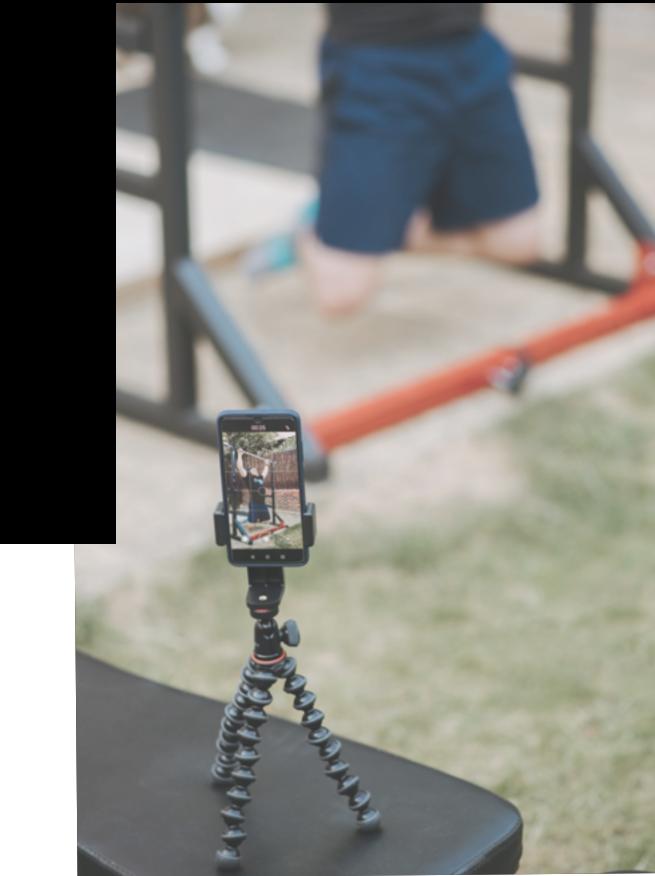
In addition, big data is also being used in sports to glean insights into player metrics and team performance, bringing fans even closer to what it is like playing the professional game. Coupled with VR and AR adoption becoming more mainstream, with 40% of global sports fans streaming matches on VR headsets to simulate in-stadium experience (Capgemini 2020), enables a much more authentic and realistic skill-sharing experiences. Although existing fan bases are the priority right now, the wider

opportunity is to connect with a younger Gen Z and more global audience, using data to sustainably acquire, engage, and retain more fans as part of an insight-driven decision-making process, whilst providing additional opportunities to partners and sponsors. Truly understanding what fan priorities are, using data, is critical when tailoring the engagement approach, in an industry that now demands experiences and interaction beyond the game.

CONTROLLABLE CONTENT



Content, especially preference led content with digital, will accelerate and go direct. Fans continue to seek immersion outside (and often during) the 90 minutes, with behind-closed-doors footage, on-line fan chats, how-to-videos, game walk- throughs, professional gamers and athletes livestreaming their play and easily accessible on demand archive footage. For example, the NBA have created a direct-to-consumer platform that delivers a personalised, live game broadcast with options of real-time statistic overlays, alternative video feeds and the opportunity to engage directly with players whether in the arena, or anywhere in the world.



These initiatives give an attractive option to sponsors and partners, as well as fans. Unique services, off-season discounts and sign-ups, insights and subscription-lite approaches through experiences that are personalised and contextualised are a potential new revenue stream for the clubs.

GAMING GOES DEEP

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Although many organisations are heavily invested in Esports, 2021 will be the year all should truly embrace the opportunity. The next generation has grown up on gaming experiences that deliver much more interactivity, with customisable avatars, in-game currencies, and personalised viewing options; all lacking in traditional broadcast.

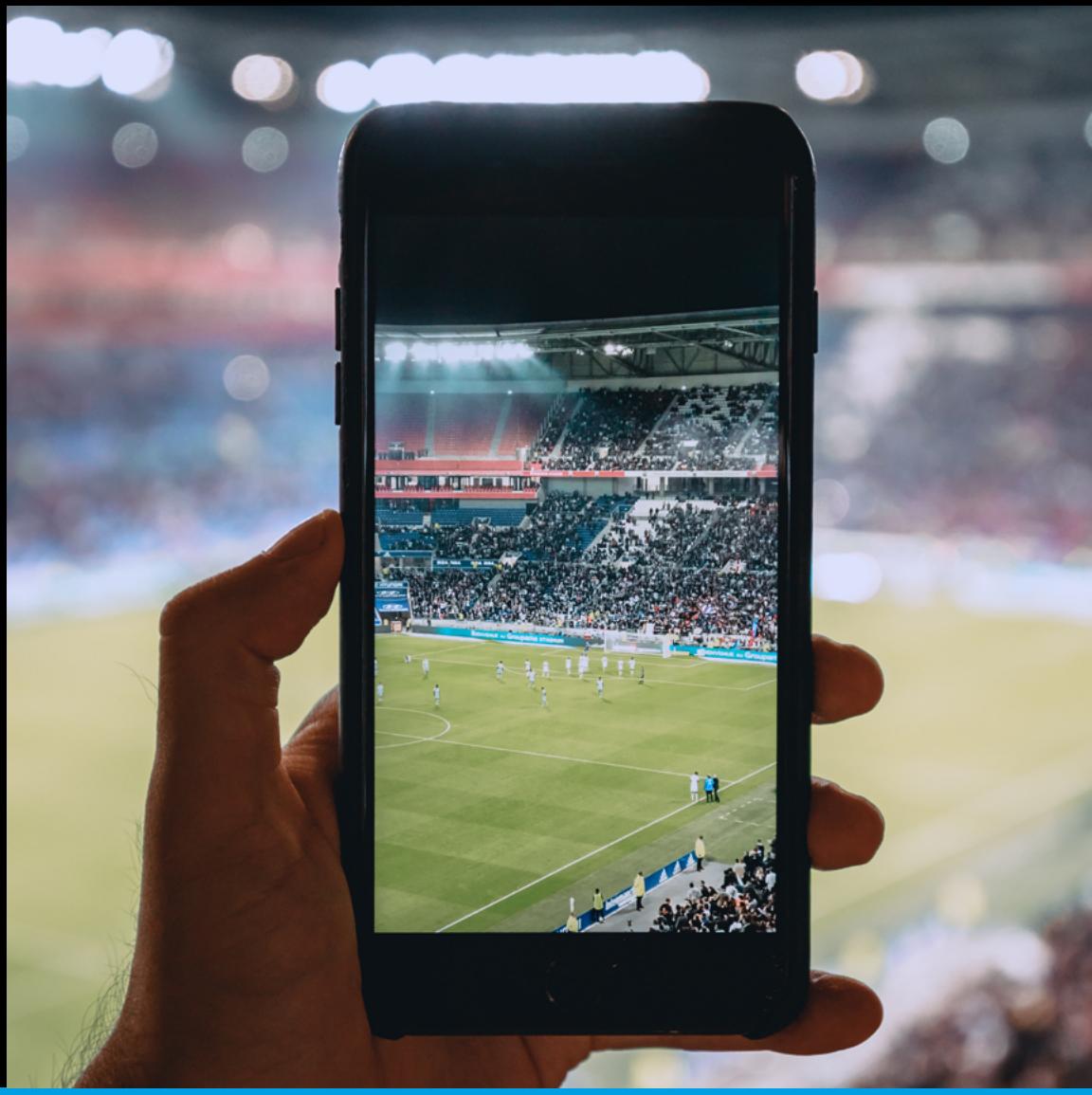
One in three sports fans are looking for more control over the live experience, wanting access to replay controls like slow motion (35%), the ability to switch between camera angles (30%), and time shifting (30%), as well as easier access to match highlights (42%), and libraries of on-demand content (22%) (Verizon Media, 2020). We are already seeing athletes becoming gaming content creators and influencers in this space and fans will want to further engage via streaming services like Twitch, and ideally play with their idols. Gaming platforms like Fortnite, will continually evolve a new metaverse where live events are played, such as Party Royal, a digital theme park, giving options to elevate and monetise this type of experience. It is likely that this phenomenon of playing, streaming, watching, and socialising within video games (fans becoming virtual players) will continue to grow and expand when lockdowns and restrictions are eased, as well as the drive for health and fitness, the clubs can capitalise on.



IMMERSIVE TICKETING

With many sports organisations and clubs having to deal with a lack of supporters at stadiums, it won't be too long before tickets are being marketed through a VR lens. A supporter having the ability to watch a game from wherever they are will give organisations extra commercial opportunities and bring the gameday experience back to the fans who are unable to attend, starting with their core ticket holders before reaching out to more casual and international audiences. Applications like StubHub are continuing to simplify ticket-buying experiences by enabling users to slide their smartphone into a pair of virtual reality goggles to receive a better view of a potential seat in a stadium or via AR, seeing options to improve their customer experience on the journey to the stadium.

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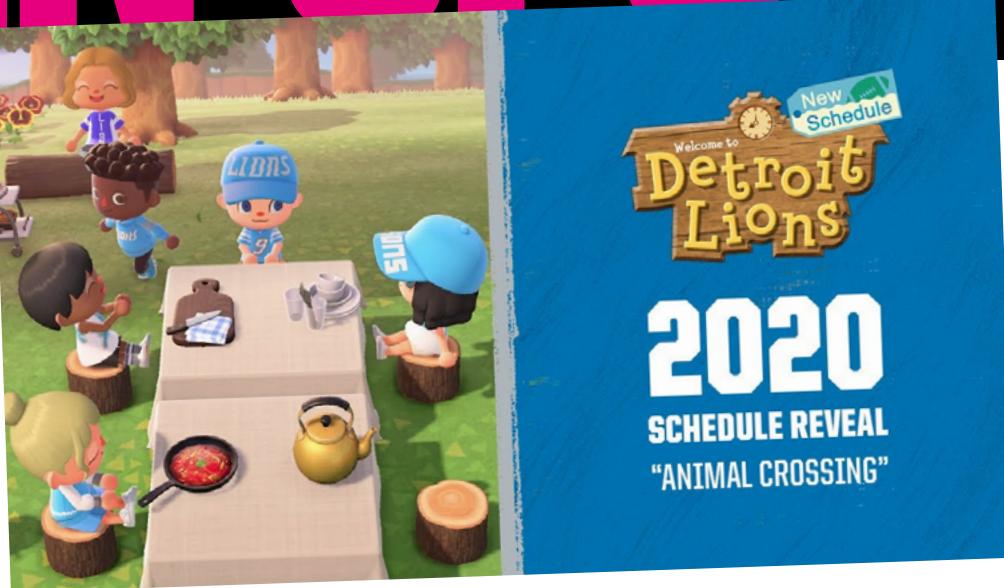
INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

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Audiences can often get a better multi-media experience from their own home, putting pressure on organisations more than ever to present stronger propositions regarding the benefits of in-person attendance to help bring fans back to stadiums and drive revenue. As well as making several infrastructure improvements, including contactless technology and better in-stadium connectivity, stadiums need to invest in the differentiators to continue to draw new generations of fans into the future. These include unique experiences to the stadium using immersive technology, particularly those that have a robust understanding of their fan's behaviours to match to their personal interests and can also be shared with others, as well as live entertainment options before, during and after the game. With this, there is also an opportunity to elevate the mobile experience, creating a seamless link between in and out of stadium activities, if this doesn't detract from the main event.

WHO'S WINNING IN SPORT?



New Virtual Touch Points: NFL team the Detroit Lions joined Animal Crossing to announce its match schedule for the 2020 season, using in-game mechanics to signify opposing teams (their game avatar buried a teddy bear to reference the Chicago Bears, for example). The video achieved over 180,000 views on Twitter, and the team also released a digital version of their jersey for fans to wear in-game.



Weaponising Performance Data: An LA-based sports tech firm launched a VR American football game in 2020 enabling sports fans to play as Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson via their Oculus headset. The moves players can make as Jackson will be based on real player tracking data to recreate authentic game scenarios. The game will bring fans as close as they've ever been to experiencing what it is like to play professional football.



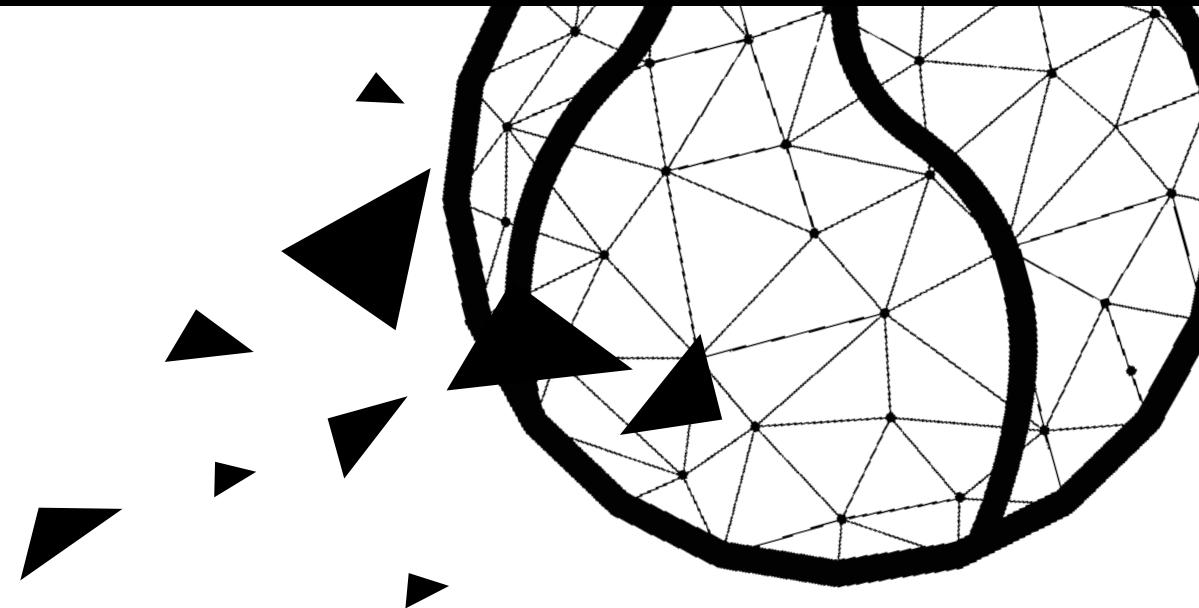
Phygital Products: Launched in 2020, GMR is a smart insole for football shoes powered by Google's Jacquard platform. It syncs with a player's FIFA Mobile game team to boost in-game performance as their moves in the real world improve. The insole tracks movement, kicks and shot power, and can distinguish between passing and shooting, distance covered, and peak running speed. FIFA publisher EA Sports has created a season-long live event that will give participating players weekly challenges for their physical performance and reward them with in-game level-ups and exclusive content.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM OTHER SECTORS?



The Responsive Commercial Space:

Driving commercialisation, the Future X Tokyo pop-up by Japanese beauty brand SK-II and Chinese e-tailer JD.com, used advanced facial recognition tech to create e-profiles for visitors; once onboarded, they unlock personalised content and product recommendations at different in-store zones by looking at cameras able to determine the state of their skin. To shop, visitors added products to a virtual basket by tapping a smart bracelet provided on entry (and synchronised to an their JD.com account) on NFC hotspots next to products or screens.



A Cinematic Sales Experience:

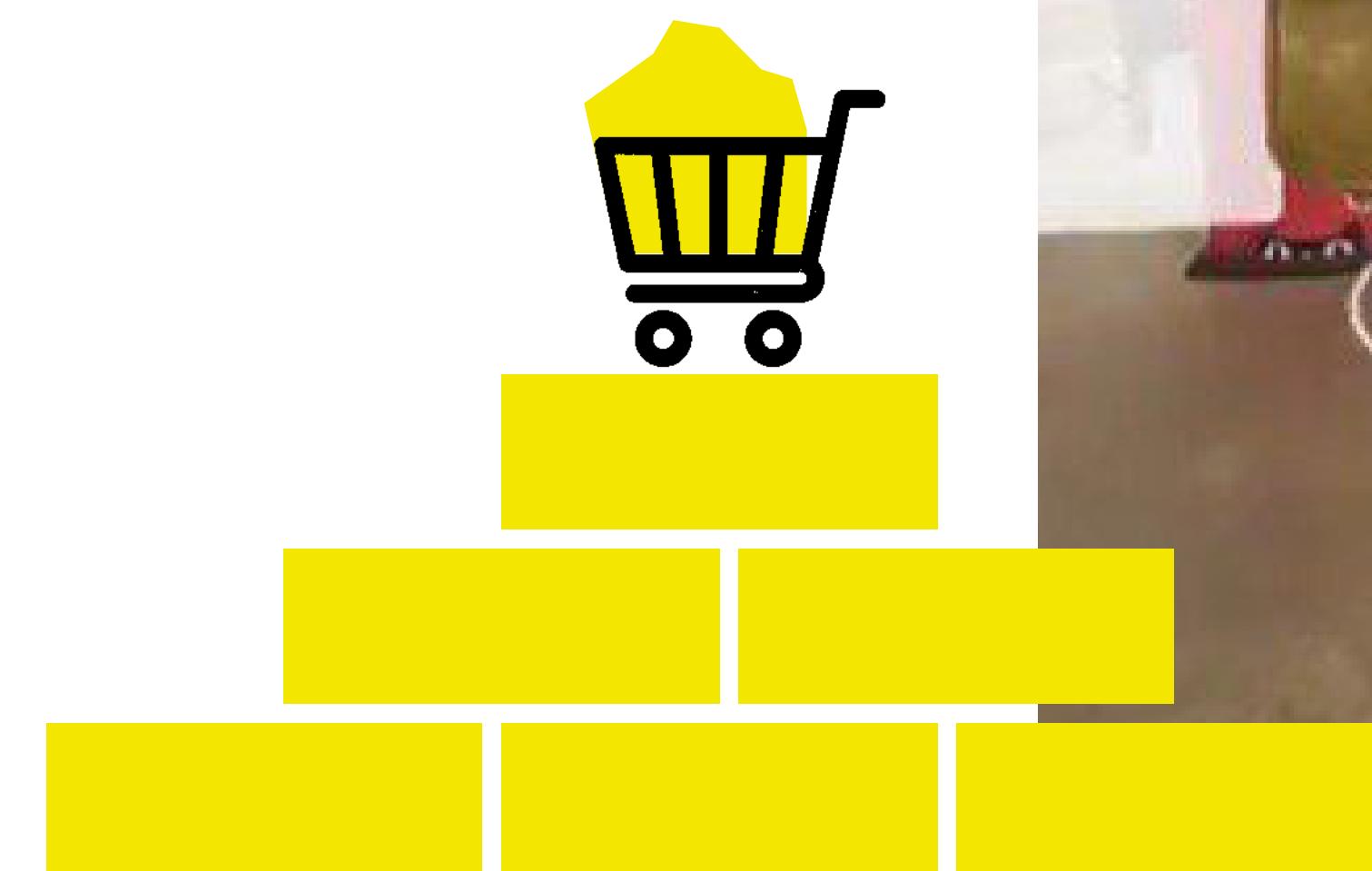
With Jaguar, as part of their Wimbledon sponsorship, you get to fly over an intricate CG reconstruction of the Wimbledon site before landing in centre court to a highly charged moment in time. Andy Murray provides the voice over and describes the feeling of playing in such a prestigious venue. The experience ends with entering the body of Andy and slamming the final match point.

The experience toured around the country in the run up to the tournament. It was also released as a 360 video for wider viewing. Using VR, it allows you to experience as close as possible what it's like to score in front of a centre-court audience at Wimbledon.

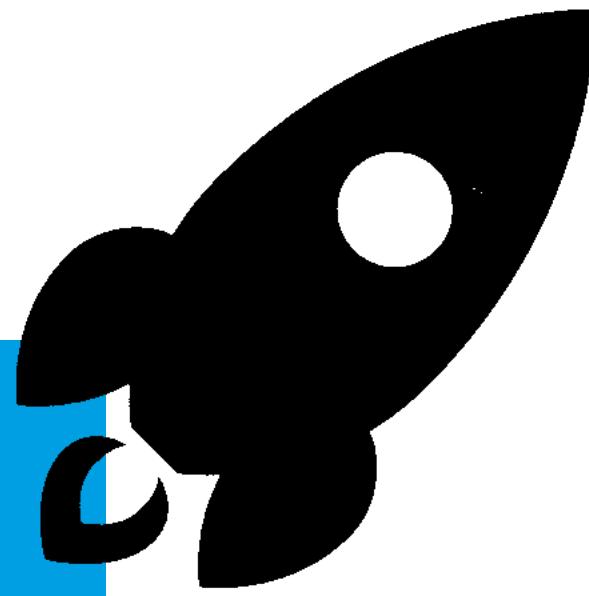
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Building a Virtual Market Place:

Capitalising on the insight that many consumers report that being able to physically touch and examine objects makes them feel more confident about making a purchase, Buy+ (Alibaba) a platform transforming online shopping into a tactile experience by creating a realistic VR experience. Using a simple consumer VR headset, Buy+ transports customers to a number of large department stores around the globe. Once there, they can 'walk' around the store as they would in real life, pick up items and examine them in 3D, and then purchase what suits them best.



FUTURE TRENDING



Design for Hyper-Customisation

Increasingly, sports fans want to watch games specifically tailored to their personal preferences. Design with hyper-customisation in mind with simple ideas like co-streaming and self-commentate matches via platforms like Twitch for fans seeking more involvement in their interactions with sports.

Tap into Upskilling Opportunities

The upskilling opportunity is huge thanks to the increasing sophistication of immersive tech and data science, particularly for sports retail and e-commerce. Invest now in building virtual training experiences around your key talent and use performance data capture to make these initiatives as authentic and meaningful as possible.

Fund the Phygital

Lockdown has accelerated consumers' affinity with digital commerce, raising their expectations for in person experiences at stadiums and alike, with omni-channel integration and more thrilling tech-boots. From remote bookings to spaces brought to life via the power of an AR app, optimise your stadium and retail space to become more immersive.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO DRIVE REVENUE

It is more important than ever that sports organisations invest to build and leverage digital channels, streaming platforms, personalised content, exclusive experiences and augmented and virtual reality solutions. Key questions organisations should be asking themselves now are:

1. Do I understand my fans intimately to better attract, engage and sustain relationships?
2. Does my current content and communications offer added value, personalisation, and reward directly to my fans?
3. Is there a comprehensive strategy in place to monetise fan and athlete performance data?
4. How am I prepared for the return to stadium to optimise the experience?

Ultimately now is the opportunity to be **BOLD** and use the challenging environment to try new things; to innovate and to provide fans with a 'year-round' experience to generate value, retaining loyalty with core fans whilst attracting the new generation.



Mongoose is an integrated sport & entertainment marketing agency, with a global footprint, that OUT WITS, OUT THINKS and OUT PLAYS the competition.

We create new opportunities to interact with brands.

Using our tools to understand your audience's unconscious behaviour, we uncover what really drives them and what they really want, establishing a genuine connection on a deeper, more emotional level to build engagement, foster relationships and participation and convert top level awareness into bottom line results.



DISCOVER MORE

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