

INDUSTRY REPORT

World Cup 2026 sponsorship & social insights report

Tournament window: 11 June – 19 July 2026

Social data captured: 10 June – 20 July 2026

Powered by the Shikenso® sponsorship-analytics platform •

Prepared by Shikenso® 2026

37,519

posts

38.44B

impressions

2.97B

engagements

7.72%

engagement rate

2.51B

followers

INDUSTRY REPORT

Executive summary

The 2026 World Cup generated roughly €952M in social media value across 2.97B engagements, but that value was anything but evenly spread. Instagram carried three-quarters of it off a third of the posts, TikTok outperformed its volume, and X and Facebook returned almost nothing. Buying reach and buying attention are not the same purchase.

The bigger shift is who captured the value. After FIFA's own account, the tournament's highest-value channels were all players, each worth more than any competing national team. At a modern World Cup, the athlete has become the media channel, and the sponsors who measured that in real time were the ones ready to act on it. That is the case Shikenso was built to make.

Tarik Amhamdi, Co-Founder & Co-CEO, Shikenso

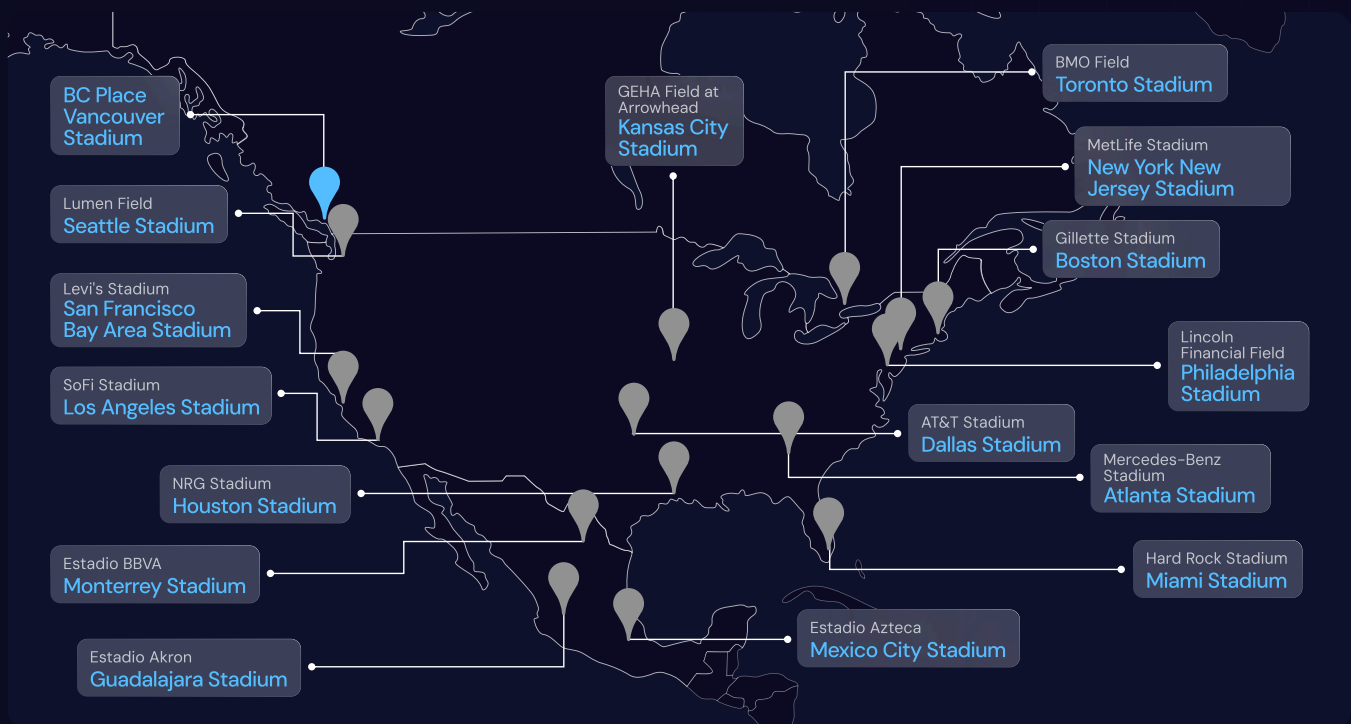
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The practical takeaways from both arcs, and where to put sponsorship budget next time.

CHAPTER 1

The blackout rule that redraws every brand's World Cup

Before a single sponsor board lights up, FIFA's rulebook decides which brands can be seen inside the ground. Under its anti-ambush clean-venue policy, 14 of the 16 host venues lose their commercial naming rights for the full 39 days, and 15 run under city names. Only BC Place in Vancouver keeps its name, because it was never named after a sponsor.



14/16

venues
stripped

15/16

under city
names

104

matches

16

venues

3

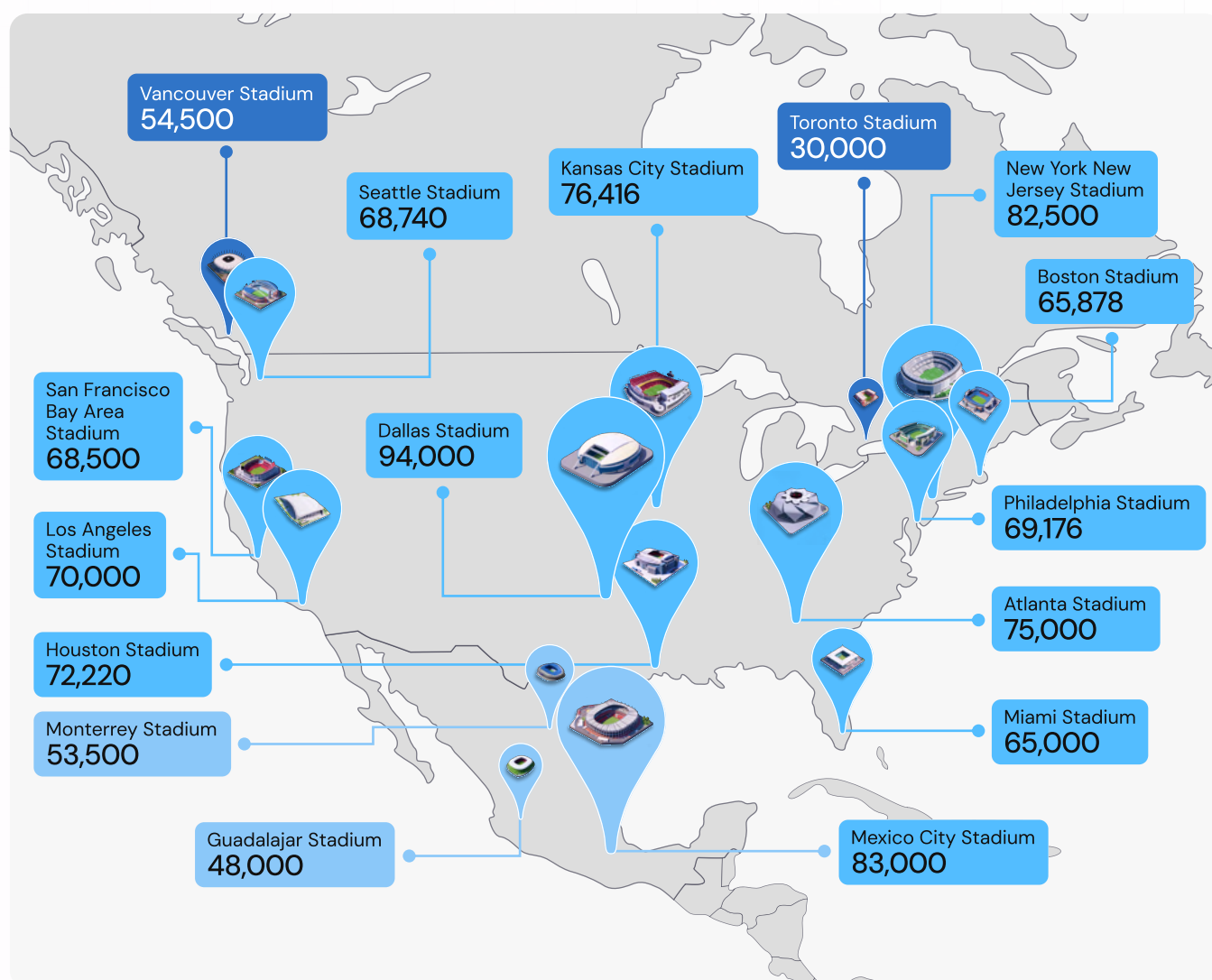
countries

The consequence is direct: only official FIFA partners get exposure inside the venue. Every other brand, including a stadium's own year-round naming sponsor, disappears from the bowl for the tournament.

Capacity is not the whole story. Venues run from Toronto's 30,000-seat BMO Field to Dallas's 94,000-seat AT&T Stadium, the biggest and the only one hosting nine matches, including a semi-final. MetLife hosts the final; Azteca becomes the first venue ever to stage three World Cup openers, yet bows out at the Round of 16.

World Cup 2026: 16 venues across 3 countries

From 30,000 seats in Toronto to 94,000 in Dallas, where each match is played determines what it is worth.



Host-venue map across USA / Mexico / Canada with capacities. Source: [Shikenso](#)

Exposure concentrates in the five heaviest-schedule venues, Dallas, Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York/NJ, and Miami, all reaching the knockouts, where every placement earns global rather than regional reach. With the names off the walls, the value that once lived on perimeter boards has to go somewhere. The rest of this report follows where.

World Cup 2026: full venue breakdown

All 16 venues ranked by highest stage, with match count, and capacity.

FIFA name	Real name	Capacity	Matches	Rounds hosted
New York New Jersey Stadium	MetLife Stadium	82,500	8	Final Round of 16 Round of 32 Group Stage
Dallas Stadium	AT&T Stadium	94,000	9	Semifinal Round of 16 Round of 32 Group Stage
Miami Stadium	Hard Rock Stadium	65,000	7	3rd Place Quarterfinal Round of 32 Group Stage
Atlanta Stadium	Mercedes-Benz Stadium	75,000	8	Semifinal Round of 16 Round of 32 Group Stage
Los Angeles Stadium	SoFi Stadium	70,000	8	Quarterfinal Round of 32 Group Stage
Kansas City Stadium	GEHA Field at Arrowhead	76,416	6	Quarterfinal Round of 32 Group Stage
Boston Stadium	Gillette Stadium	65,878	7	Quarterfinal Round of 32 Group Stage
Mexico City Stadium	Estadio Azteca	83,000	5	Round of 16 Round of 32 Group Stage
Houston Stadium	NRG Stadium	72,220	7	Round of 16 Round of 32 Group Stage
Philadelphia Stadium	Lincoln Financial Field	69,176	6	Round of 16 Group Stage
Seattle Stadium	Lumen Field	68,740	6	Round of 16 Round of 32 Group Stage
San Francisco Bay Area Stadium	Levi's Stadium	68,500	6	Round of 32 Group Stage
BC Place Vancouver Stadium	BC Place Vancouver Stadium	54,500	7	Round of 32 Group Stage
Monterrey Stadium	Estadio BBVA	53,500	4	Round of 32 Group Stage
Toronto Stadium	BMO Field	30,000	6	Round of 32 Group Stage
Guadalajara Stadium	Estadio Akron	48,000	4	Group Stage

Venue capacity/stage table, cut to the key rows (AT&T, MetLife, Azteca, BMO, plus the five knockout venues).
Source: [Shikenso](#)

CHAPTER 2

One player at a time: how challenger brands crash the party

With the stadium locked to official partners, the boot is the one on-pitch channel any brand can still buy. Kit deals and boot deals run on different rules: a kit deal follows the federation, a boot deal follows the player. So a footballer can wear one brand on the shirt and another on the feet, and a brand with no FIFA relationship at all can still own the close-up shots.



Kit deals

Federation-level contract between brand and national association

Exposure tied to team performance and broadcast minutes

Adidas example: 14 kit contracts — every player in those squads wears Adidas on the pitch

VS



Boot deals

Player-level endorsement negotiated individually

Exposure tied to that player's screen time across all competitions

Nike example: no official FIFA partnership, but Mbappé, Vinícius Jr, and Haaland all in Swoosh boots

The kit-vs-boot "two systems" graphic (kit follows federation, boot follows player). Source: [Shikenso](#)

Nike leads the field it cannot officially enter. It holds the strongest roster at the tournament, Mbappé, Vinícius Jr, Ronaldo, and Haaland among them, despite holding no FIFA partnership. Adidas answers as the only official partner, the match-ball supplier, and the only brand allowed the FIFA emblem on its boots, carrying Messi, Lamine Yamal, and Bellingham.

6

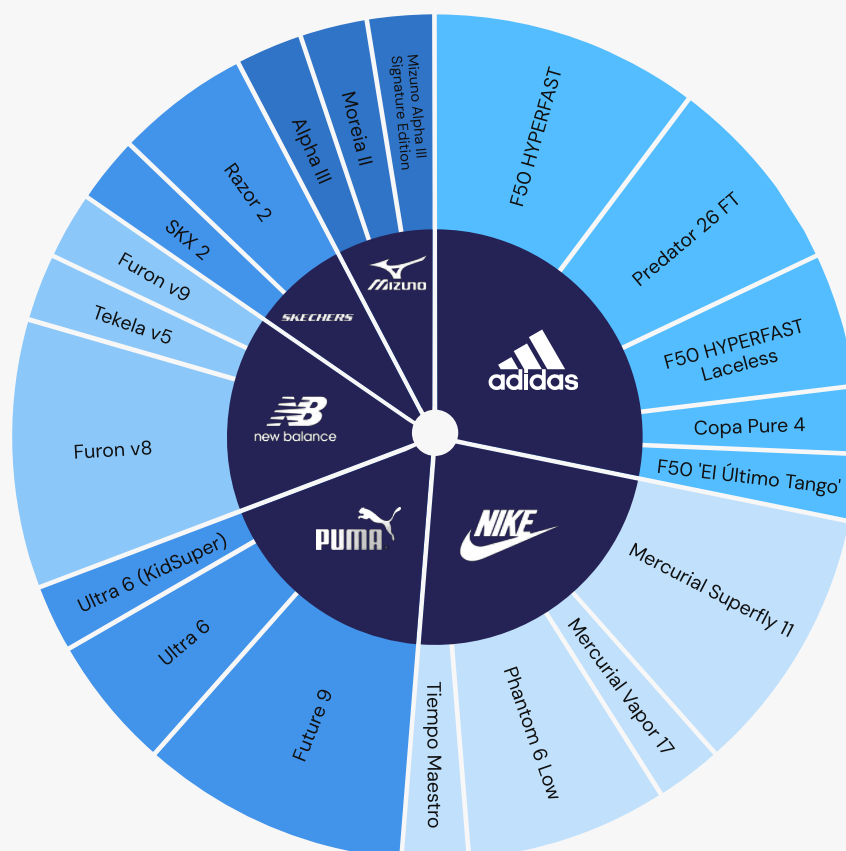
brands with meaningful
boot presence

14/48

national kits supplied
by Adidas

Nike leads the player
roster with no FIFA
partnership

World Cup 2026 boots at a glance



A breakdown of the tournament's most notable players and the brands competing for their feet. Source: [Shikenso](#)

Player	Country	Brand	Boot
Lamine Yamal	 Spain	Adidas	F50 HYPERFAST
Ousmane Dembélé	 France	Adidas	F50 HYPERFAST
Julián Álvarez	 Argentina	Adidas	F50 HYPERFAST
Gilberto Mora	 Mexico	Adidas	F50 HYPERFAST
Jude Bellingham	 England	Adidas	Predator 26 FT
Pedri	 Spain	Adidas	Predator 26 FT
Jonathan David	 Canada	Adidas	Predator 26 FT
Son Heung-min	 South Korea	Adidas	F50 HYPERFAST Laceless
Gio Reyna	 United States	Adidas	F50 HYPERFAST Laceless
Declan Rice	 England	Adidas	Copa Pure 4
Lionel Messi	 Argentina	Adidas	F50 'El Último Tango'
Cristiano Ronaldo	 Portugal	Nike	Mercurial Superfly 11
Kylian Mbappé	 France	Nike	Mercurial Superfly 11
Alphonso Davies	 Canada	Nike	Mercurial Superfly 11
Marcus Rashford	 England	Nike	Mercurial Superfly 11
Vinícius Júnior	 Brazil	Nike	Mercurial Vapor 17
Erling Haaland	 Norway	Nike	Phantom 6 Low
Raúl Jiménez	 Mexico	Nike	Phantom 6 Low
Hwang Hee-Chan	 South Korea	Nike	Phantom 6 Low
Jamal Musiala	 Germany	Nike	Tiempo Maestro
Neymar Jr.	 Brazil	Puma	Future 9
Kai Havertz	 Germany	Puma	Future 9
Morgan Rogers	 England	Puma	Future 9
Weston McKennie	 United States	Puma	Future 9
Memphis Depay	 Netherlands	Puma	Ultra 6
Cody Gakpo	 Netherlands	Puma	Ultra 6
Christian Pulisic	 United States	Puma	Ultra 6 (KidSuper)
Timothy Weah	 United States	New Balance	Furon v8
Eberechi Eze	 England	New Balance	Furon v8
Yan Diomande	 Côte d'Ivoire	New Balance	Furon v8
Djed Spence	 England	New Balance	Furon v8
Endrick	 Brazil	New Balance	Tekela v5
Bukayo Saka	 England	New Balance	Furon v9
Harry Kane	 England	Skechers	SKX 2
Anthony Elanga	 Sweden	Skechers	Razor 2
Bariş Alper Yılmaz	 Türkiye	Skechers	Razor 2
Maxence Lacroix	 France	Mizuno	Alpha III
Maya Yoshida	 Japan	Mizuno	Morelia II
João Félix	 Portugal	Mizuno	Mizuno Alpha III Signature Edition

Boot-brand breakdown (the six brands) and/or the full roster-by-brand graphic. Source: [Shikenso](#)

Behind the two giants, the challengers use star power to reach the same screens. Puma tripled its marketing spend versus 2024 and anchors on Neymar. New Balance runs entirely through players like Saka, treating the tournament as a credibility platform rather than an ambush. Skechers arrives on Harry Kane, Mizuno on João Félix, each buying a seat at a table long controlled by Nike, Adidas, and Puma.

£23M/year

the reported value of Neymar's Puma deal, the highest annual boot deal in football history at signing, and entirely outside the official FIFA partner structure.

Source: [GiveMeSport](#)

The pattern is the blackout thesis in miniature: shut out of official inventory, challenger brands buy their way onto the pitch one player at a time. Kit follows the flag, boots follow the star, and the next chapter shows where the biggest audiences for those stars actually live.

CHAPTER 3

How the World Cup audience grew online

The 48 teams arrived with wildly different social footprints. Summed across seven platforms, France led on 53.3M followers, ahead of Brazil (43.3M) and Portugal (40M), while the newest qualifiers sat below 400K. Instagram is the only platform all 48 teams share; 15 have no TikTok account and 30 have no Threads.

World Cup 2026: All 48 national teams ranked by total social media following

Combined followers across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, YouTube, Threads and LinkedIn

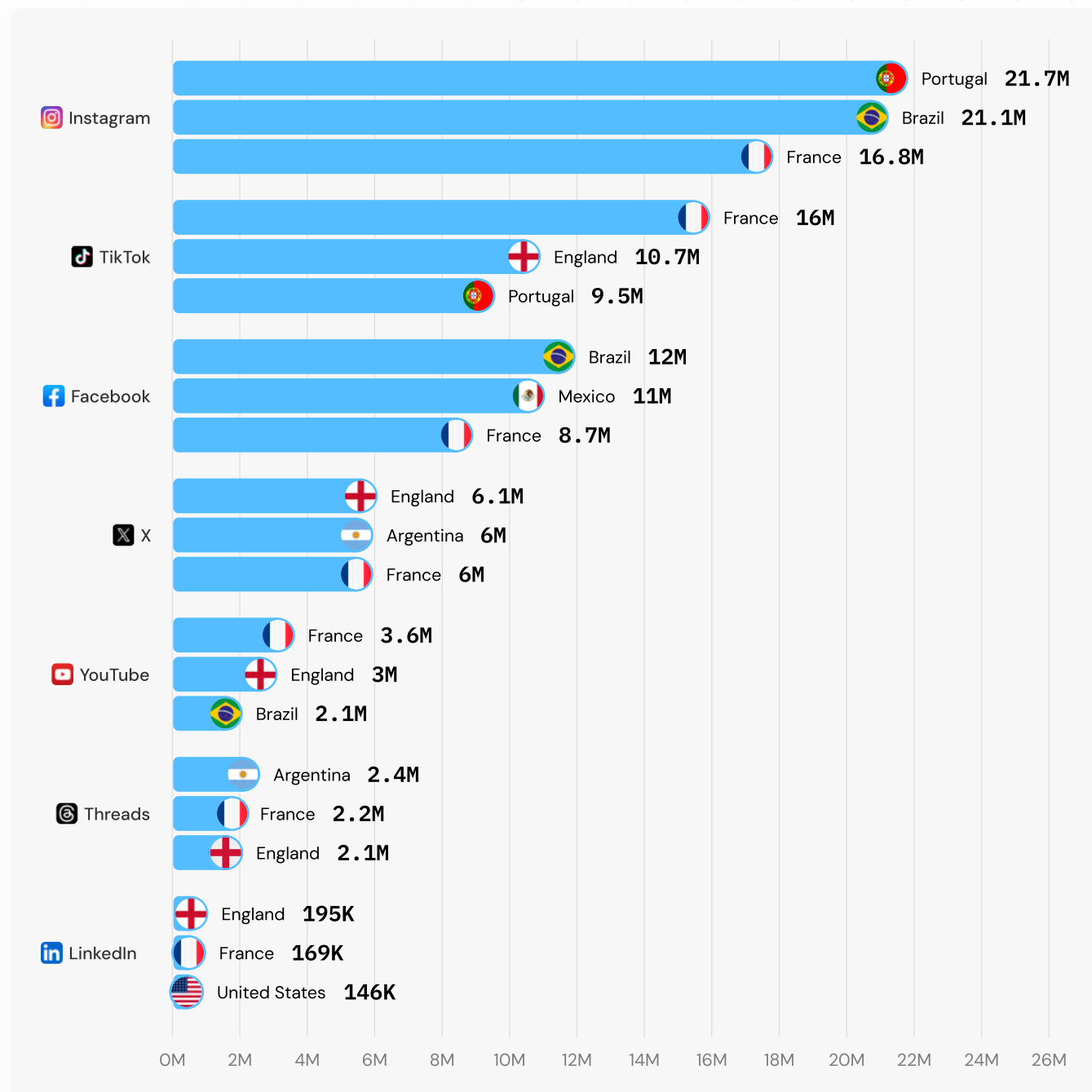


1 ● = 1 Million followers

Data as of 28 May 2026

Who leads on each platform at the World Cup 2026

Top 3 national teams by followers on each channel



Data as of 28 May 2026

Pre-kickoff total-following ranking, all 48 teams. Source: [Shikenso](#)

For most nations the real audience sits with a player, not the flag. The gap is widest at Norway, where the top player's Instagram following is 66x the national team's, followed by Austria (50x) and Türkiye (47x). A brand chasing those fans has to work through the player.

National team vs top player: the Instagram gap at the World Cup 2026

How a player's personal Instagram following compares to the official national team account

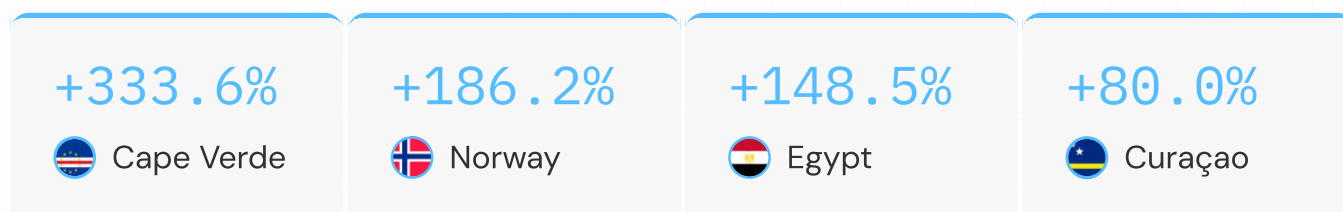
	Norway, @herrelandslaget (604K)	Erling Haaland, @erling (40M)		66.2x gap
	Austria, @oefb_1904 (299K)	David Alaba, @davidalaba (15M)		50.2x gap
	Türkiye, @tff_resmi (384K)	Arda Güler, @ardaguler (18M)		46.9x gap
	Croatia, @hns_cff (876K)	Luka Modrić, @lukamodric10 (39M)		44.5x gap
	Egypt, @egyptnt (1.5M)	Mohamed Salah, @mosalah (65M)		43.3x gap
	Argentina, @afaseleccion (14.4M)	Lionel Messi, @leomessi (506M)		35.1x gap
	Portugal, @portugal (21.7M)	Cristiano Ronaldo, @cristiano (665M)		30.7x gap
	Belgium, @belgianreddevils (1.1M)	Kevin De Bruyne, @kevindebruyne (26M)		23.6x gap
	Bosnia and Herzegovina, @nfsbih_official (90.9K)	Edin Džeko, @edindzeko (2M)		22.0x gap
	Korea Republic, @thekfa (943K)	Son Heung-min, @hm_son7 (14M)		14.8x gap

Data as of 28 May 2026

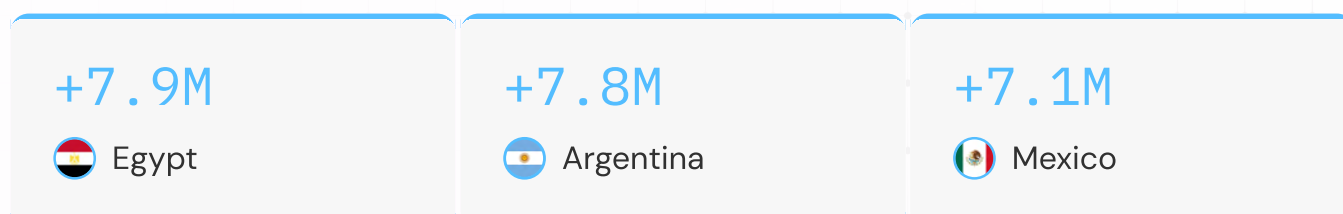
National-team-vs-player Instagram gap table (Norway 66x). Source: [Shikenso](#)

Then the matches began, and the audience moved, fastest where results surprised. Across the tournament the tracked accounts added more than 150 million followers (2.51B total tracked). In absolute terms the giants gained most: Egypt added +7.9M followers, ahead of Argentina (+7.8M) and Mexico (+7.1M). But the percentage board tells the real story.

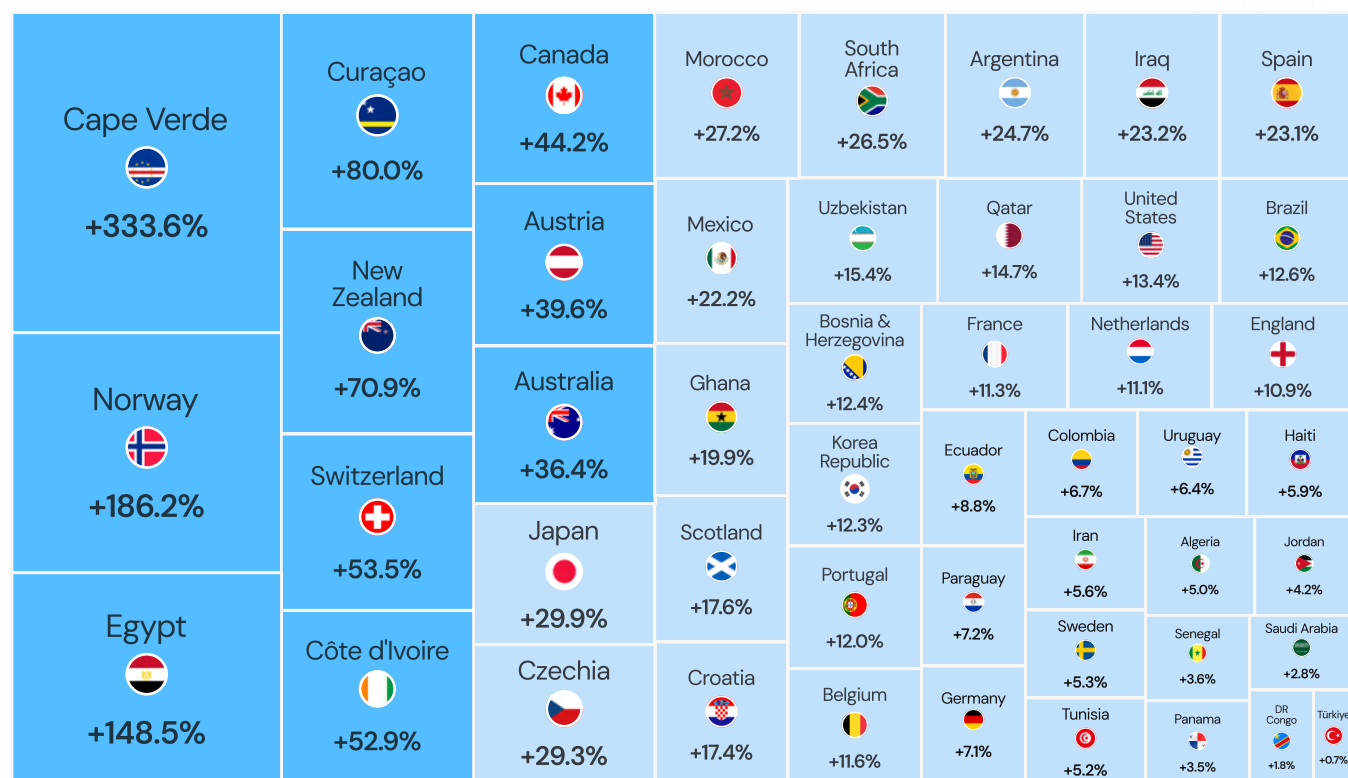
FASTEST CLIMBERS



BIGGEST ABSOLUTE



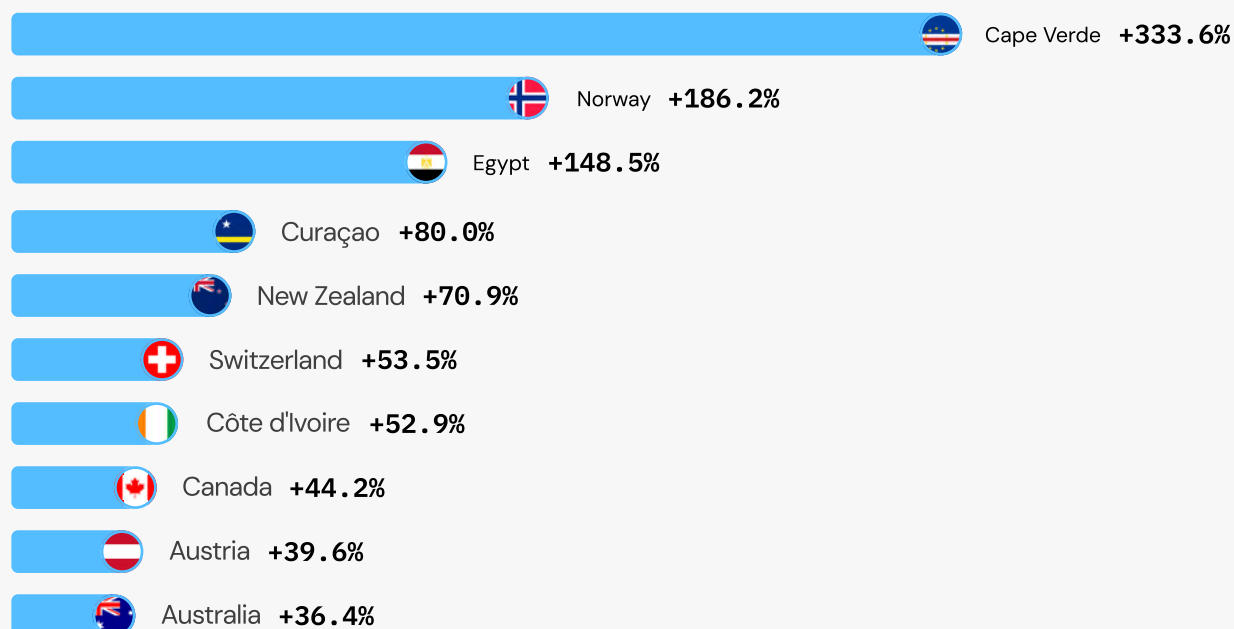
■ Above average ($\geq 31.8\%$)
 ■ Below average ($\leq 31.8\%$)



Follower growth by national team, all platforms, tournament window. Tile size reflects percentage growth.
Source: Shikenso

Fastest-growing teams (follower growth %)

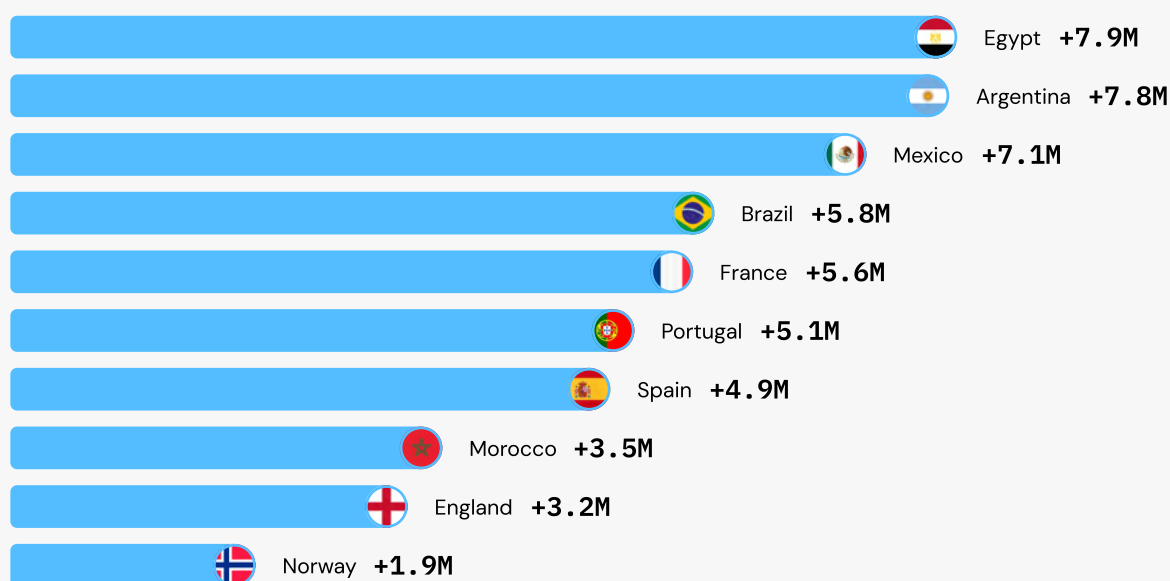
All platforms · 10 Jun – 20 Jul 2026



The ten fastest-growing national teams by follower percentage, all platforms combined. Source: Shikenso

Biggest absolute follower gains

All platforms · Millions of new followers



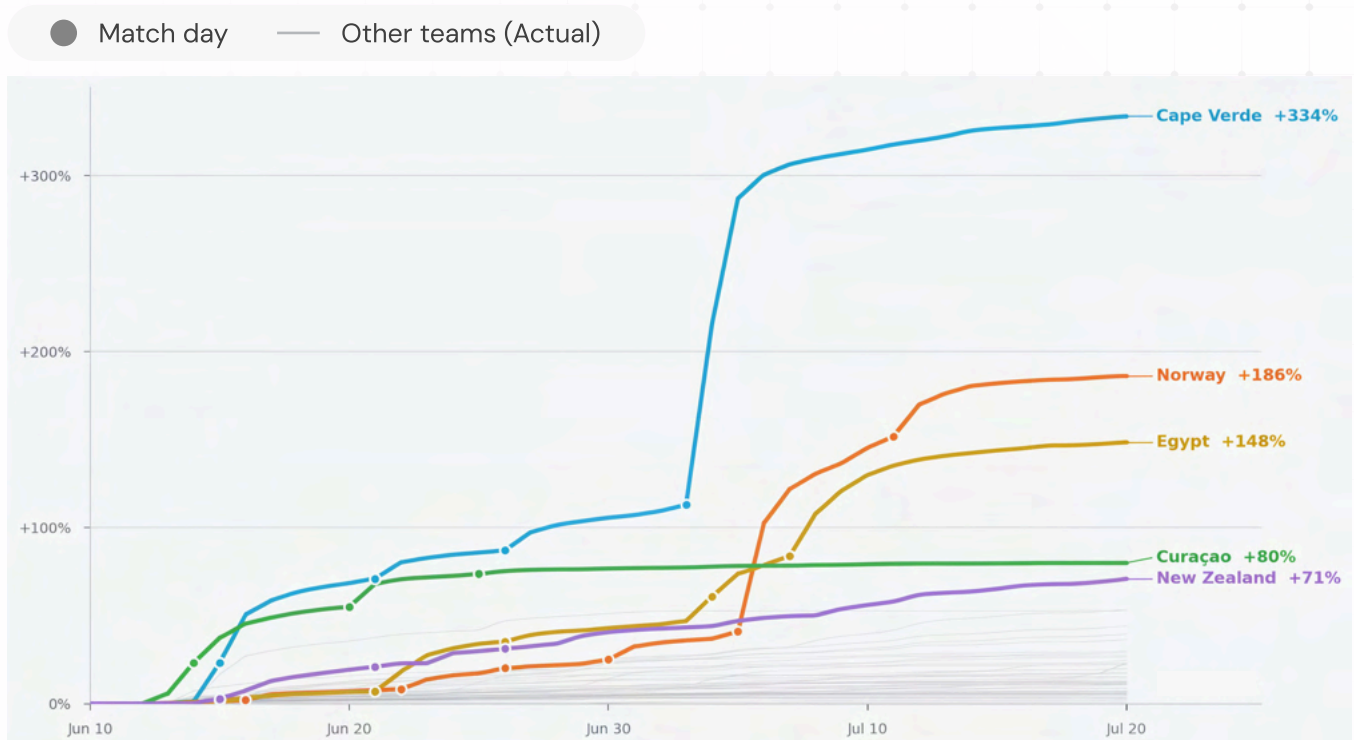
The ten biggest absolute follower gains, in millions of new followers across all platforms. Source: Shikenso

Normalised against population, the board flips entirely. Small nations dominate: Curaçao's national-team following runs well above its entire population, and Cape Verde's sits near three-quarters of its people, ratios no major footballing power approaches.

Follower growth tracked the fixture list closely. Through the group stage the lines move slowly, then rise sharply in the knockout rounds, with each jump landing within a day of a result. The chart highlights the five fastest-growing teams and greys out the rest of the field.

How national-team audiences grew, match day by match day

Cumulative follower growth (%), all platforms



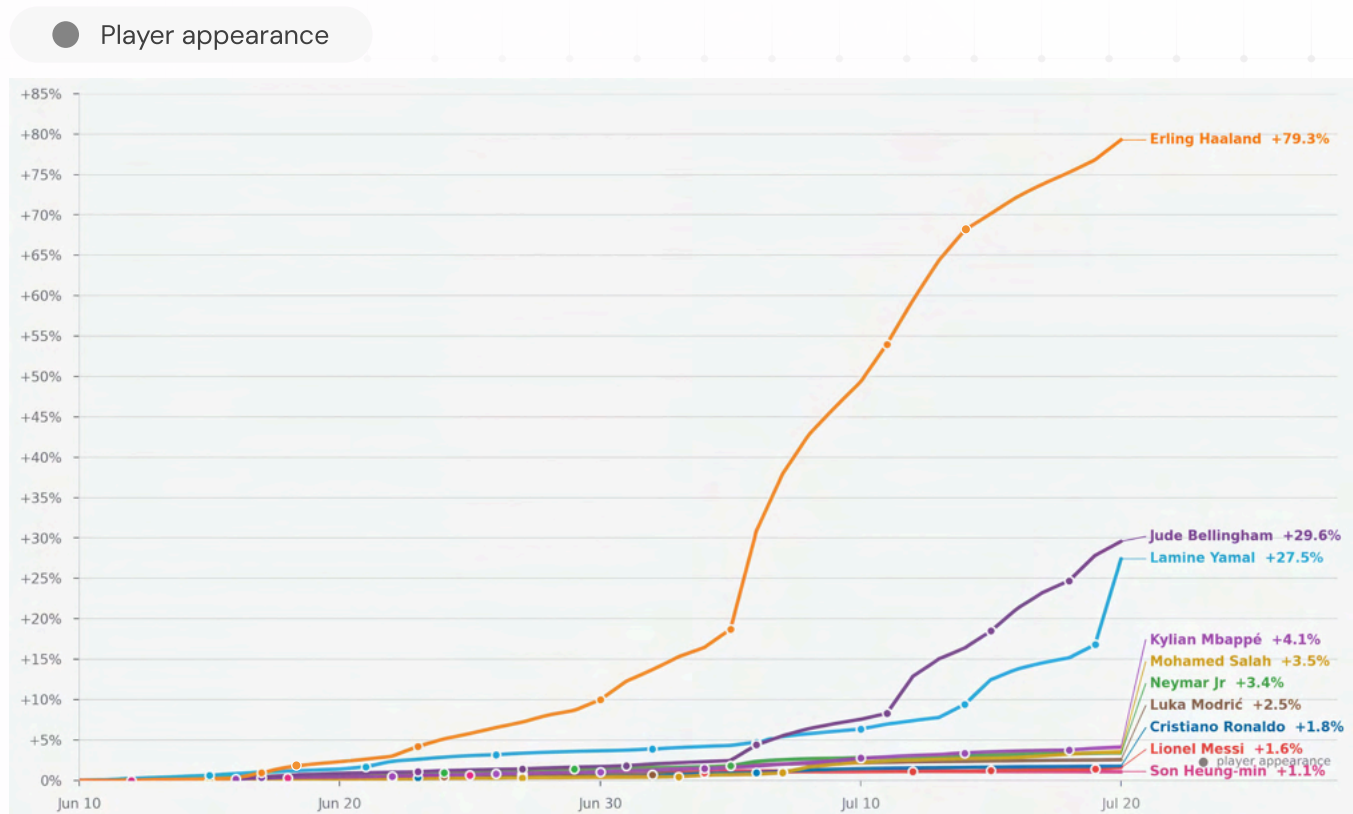
How national-team audiences grew, match day by match day. Cumulative follower growth (%), all platforms; the top five teams by growth are highlighted, all others shown in grey. Dots mark matches played. Source: Shikenso

Cape Verde is the clearest example. Their following is flat until the Round of 32 against Argentina on 3 July, then climbs the next day as the smallest nation ever to reach the knockouts. Norway rises twice in a week, after eliminating Brazil and again after the quarter-final against England on 11 July. Teams that exited in the group stage, such as Curaçao and New Zealand, level off by late June.

The effect is stronger for players, because a single tournament can reshape an individual's reach more than an established national team's. The same top-five highlighting applies. Haaland added almost five million followers in a single day, after Norway beat Brazil. Bellingham climbs through England's run to the final, and Lamine Yamal gains most in the closing week. Messi, Ronaldo and Neymar stay flat, already too large for one run to shift.

How players' audiences grew, match by match day

Cumulative follower growth (%)



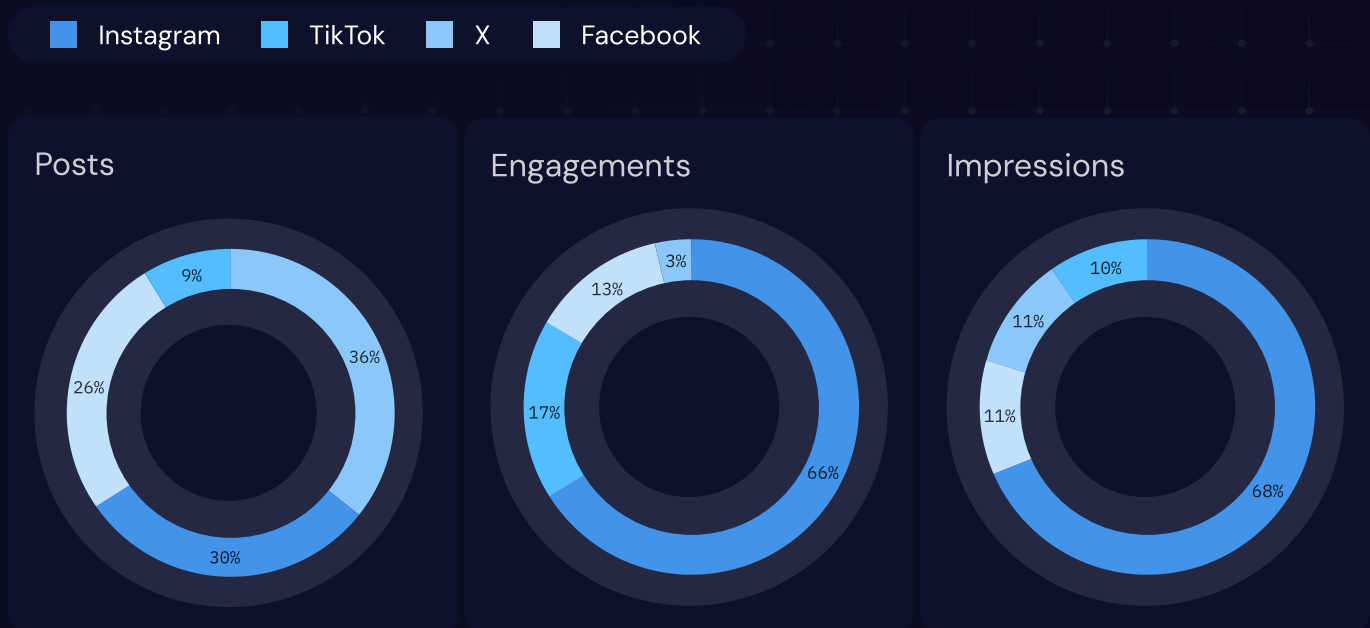
How players' audiences grew, match day by match day. Cumulative follower growth (%); the top five players by growth are highlighted, all others shown in grey. Dots mark their match day. Source: Shikenso

For a sponsor, the audience is not fixed before kickoff. It builds match by match, concentrating around the players and underdogs the tournament turns into stories. The next chapter looks at where that attention paid, and on which platforms.

CHAPTER 4

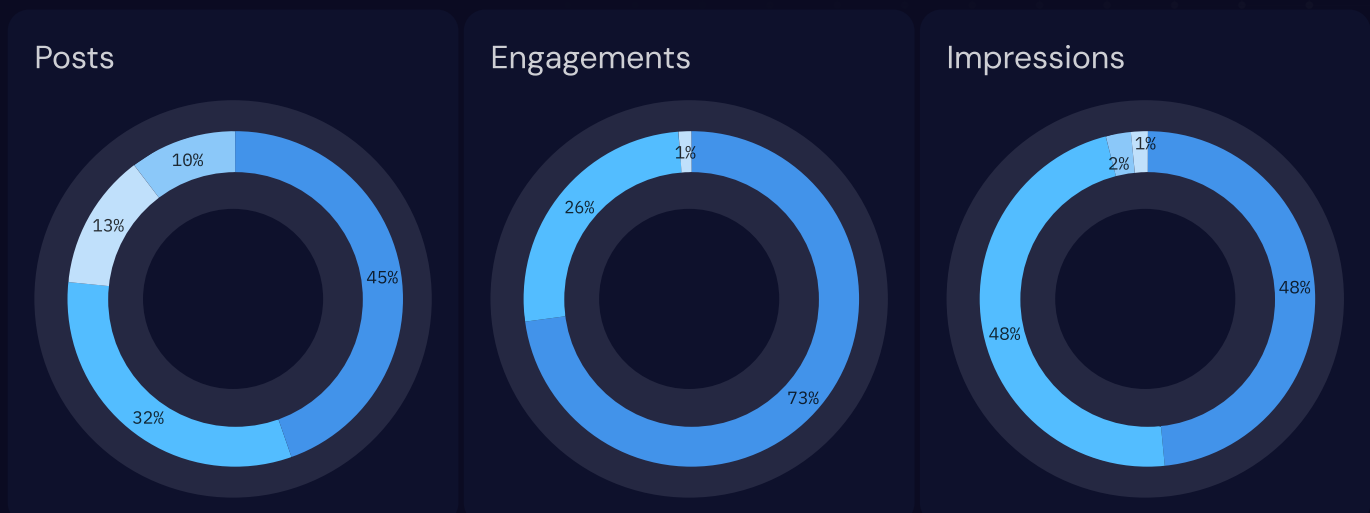
How attention behaved

The tournament produced 2.97B engagements at a 7.72% engagement rate. Reach and attention are not the same thing, and the gap between them is clearest across national teams, whose accounts run on all four major platforms.



Share of posts, engagement and impressions by platform, national teams. Source: Shikenso

National teams still spread posts across platforms that return almost nothing, while Instagram and TikTok do the real work. For a sponsor, that gap is the opportunity: buy placement where attention actually concentrates, not where the federation posts most.

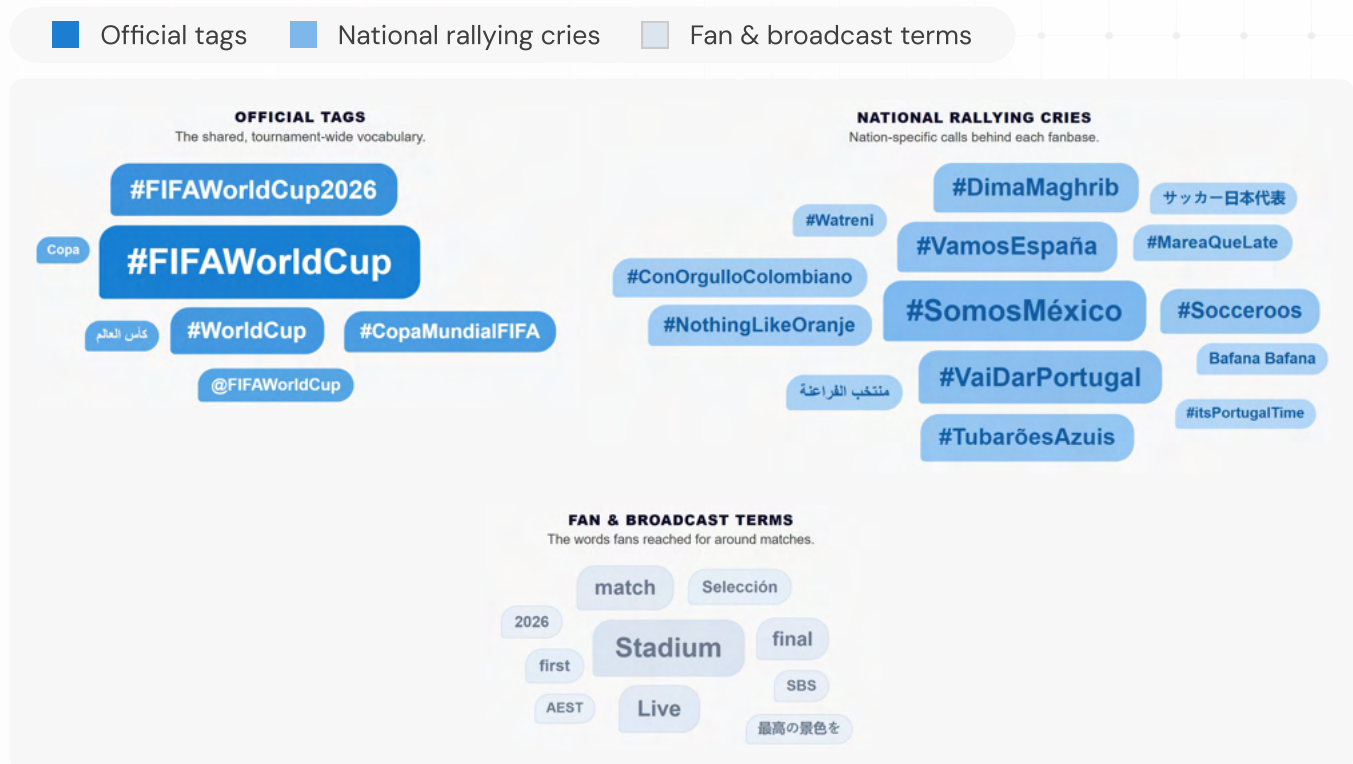


Share of posts, engagement and impressions by platform, FIFA official account. Source: Shikenso

FIFA already runs this way, backing Instagram for engagement and TikTok for reach and ignoring the rest. It is the model to benchmark against. A sponsor should weight spend toward those two platforms and treat X and Facebook as marginal, whatever the posting volume suggests.

The conversation itself was multilingual and regional. The dominant tags spanned the official #FIFAWorldCup alongside nation-specific rallying cries, #VaiDarPortugal, #SomosMéxico, #DimaMaghrib, #Socceroos, #CaboVerde, and Japanese-language tags, in at least six languages. No single language owned the tournament.

Word Cloud of dominant hashtags & terms



Word Cloud of dominant hashtags and terms. Source: Shikenso

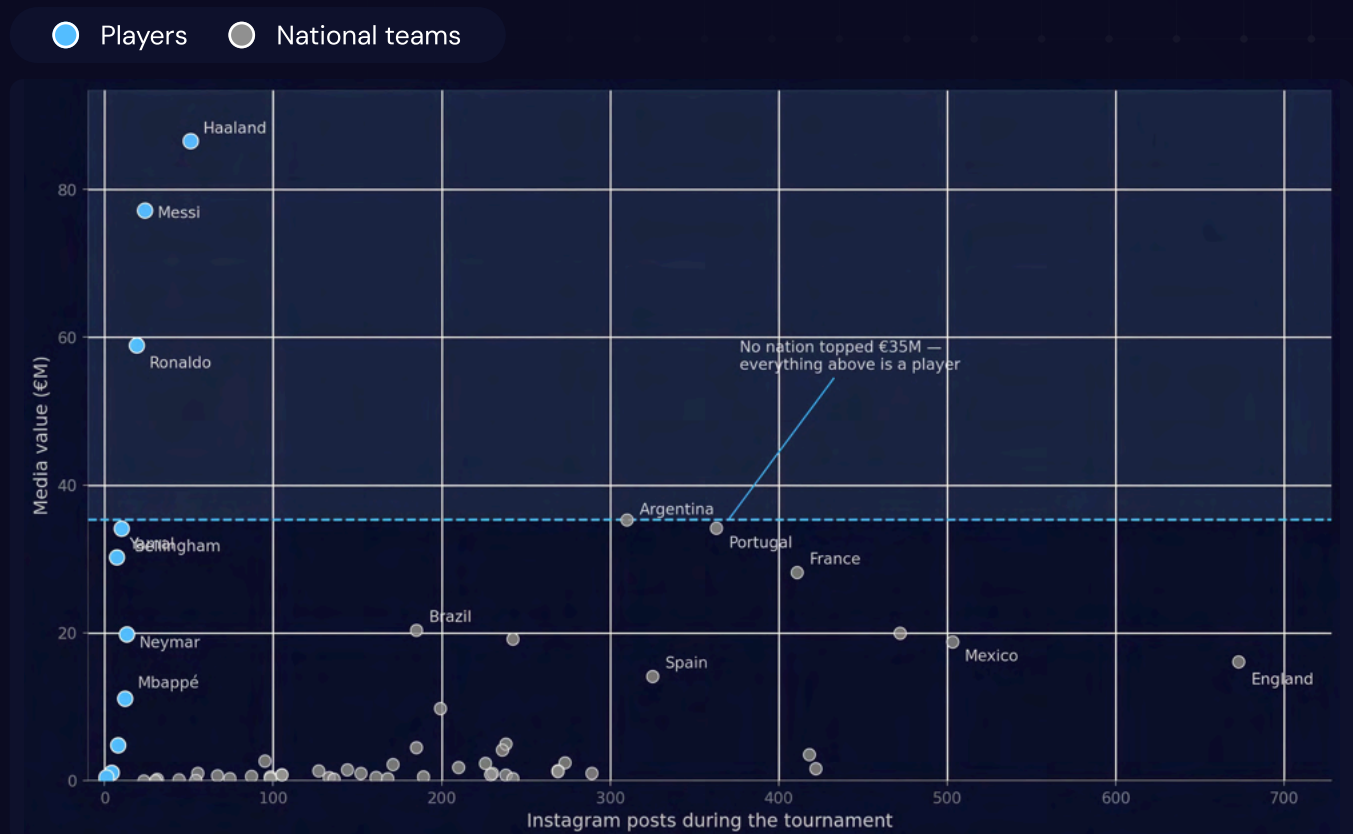
CHAPTER 5

The athlete is the media channel

The clearest signal in the data isn't the size of the number — it's where the value lands. Media value here is modelled from the accounts and platforms we track (players on Instagram; national teams on Instagram, TikTok, X and Facebook), so we compare like-for-like on the one platform that covers everyone: Instagram. There the pattern is unmistakable — value concentrates on individuals, not institutions, and no national team gets near the top players.

Few posts, enormous value — the personal-brand premium

Every player and all 48 national teams on Instagram: posts vs media value

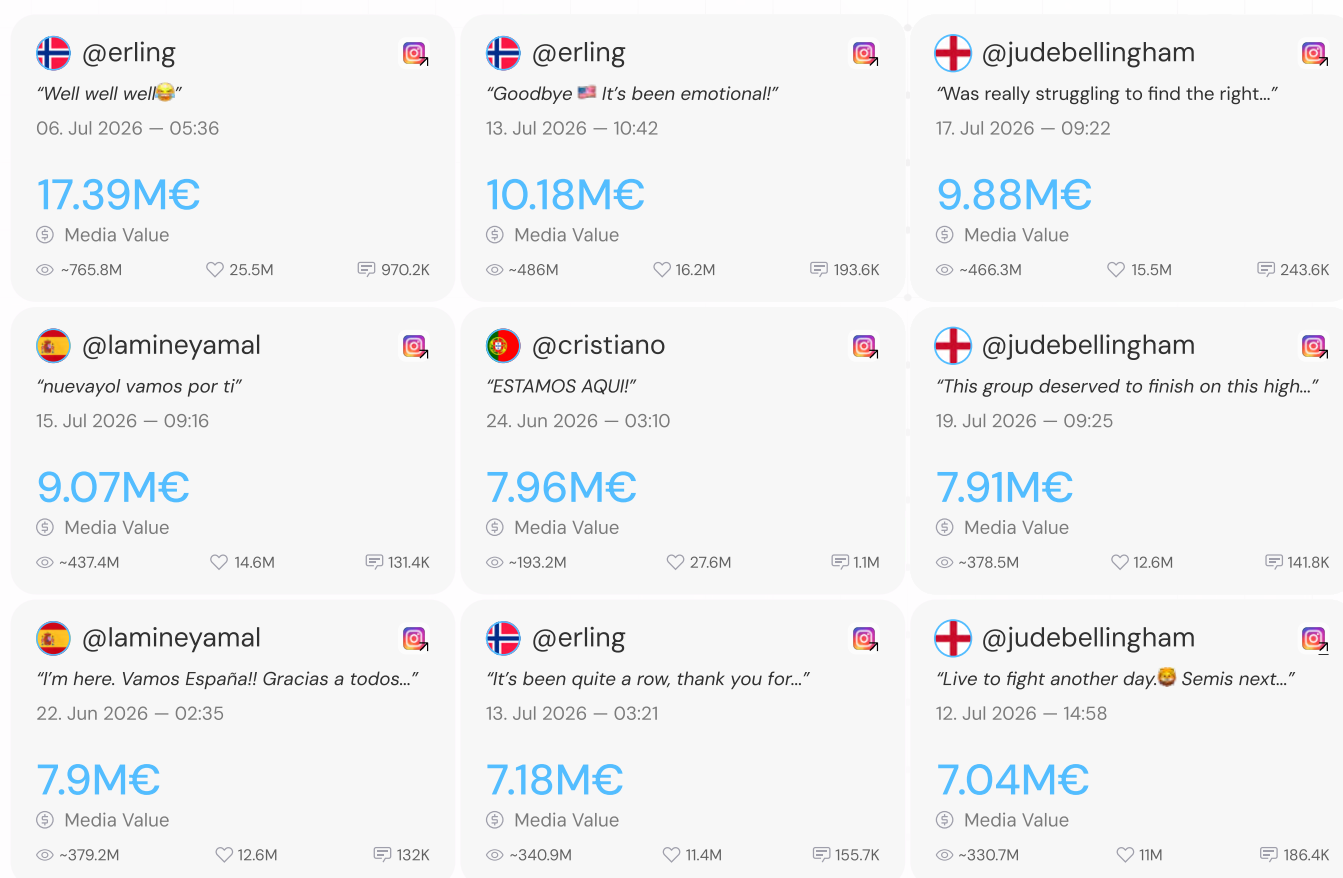


Instagram posts vs media value — every player and all 48 national teams. No nation topped €35M; everything above the line is a player. Source: Shikenso (Instagram only)

Value rides on a handful of posts, almost all of them players'. Haaland's post-match "Well well well" alone was worth €16.72M off roughly 733M impressions, and the only national team in the top ten was Norway, riding the same moment. For a brand, one athlete post in the right minute can outperform a federation's whole tournament.

Top 9 Instagram posts by media value

Source: Shikenso Social dashboard.



A single Cristiano Ronaldo post was worth €7.97M, against roughly €59,000 for an average FIFA post. That is over 130 times the value of one player post versus a typical post from the tournament's own account.

Ronaldo's following alone (677M) is larger than all 48 World Cup nations combined (461M).

This holds well beyond the marquee names. Individual accounts convert attention into value at a rate no institution matches, which is the core of how creator economics works.

The timing points to what drove these numbers. The biggest posts landed in the minutes after a knockout win or a farewell, when attention gathered around a person rather than a fixture. For a sponsor, the lesson is plain: at a modern World Cup, the athlete carries the media value.

CHAPTER 6

What brands should do before the next whistle

Read together, the brand landscape and the social data point to one shift and five practical moves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 01 Buy moments, not months. Value concentrates in a handful of match-days and the minutes after big results. Flexible, reactive activation beats a flat, always-on spend that pays for the quiet days to catch the loud ones.
- 02 Back the person, not just the badge. After FIFA, the three highest-value channels were all players, and one athlete post can outperform a federation's whole tournament. Weight budget toward player and creator deals — the leverage is moving from the crest to the person wearing it.
- 03 Follow attention across platforms. Instagram and TikTok carried the engagement and the value; X and Facebook returned almost nothing. Weight spend to where attention concentrates, not where volume is highest.
- 04 Show up on the official platform before your moment. TikTok was FIFA's Preferred Platform, yet 17 of 48 teams weren't on it — you cannot capture a surge on a channel you're not posting to.
- 05 Measure in real time. The audience isn't fixed before kickoff; it builds match by match. The sponsors who saw the shift live were the ones positioned to act on it.

"Stop buying the tournament and start buying the moments — and the people who create them. That's the difference between paying for a logo and capturing attention."

Tarik Amhamdi, Co-Founder & Co-CEO, Shikenso

Methodology & notes

This report draws on two sources, kept distinct. Arc A (venues, naming rights, boots) is desk research published on the Shikenso Insights blog, captured as one-time snapshots. Arc B (all social performance) is post-level and daily data from the Shikenso Social dashboard and the Instagram follower tracker, covering players, national teams and public tournament accounts across Instagram, TikTok, X and Facebook.

On windows and scope: the tournament ran 11 June to 19 July 2026, while the social data window is 10 June to 20 July 2026, last refreshed 21 July. Every chart uses the data window. Two data universes stay separate and are never mixed. Content value and engagement cover Players, National Teams and FIFA (a 2.51B follower base), while daily follower-growth figures cover National Teams only. Player media value is Instagram-only, so wherever players are compared to teams, teams are held to Instagram too for a like-for-like read.

Metric glossary. Impressions are the estimated times content was displayed. Engagements combine likes, comments and shares. Engagement rate measures engagements against reach. Media value (€) is a post's estimated monetary worth, modelled at post level from reach and format, and it is an AdEquivalent estimate rather than booked revenue. Two caveats: some dashboard fields (Branded Posts, Detections, Avg. Impact Quotient, aggregate Brand Media Value) were unpopulated and are excluded.

Publisher's Note

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