

## iStock research reveals recreational/amateur sports players' images and videos often get forgotten by brands, and they shouldn't

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**New York — November 8, 2022:** Soccer fans' excitement around the 2022 FIFA World Cup is reaching fever pitch as we finally get closer to kick-off. Brands and sponsors have already been leveraging these emotions to engage with supporters from all over the world, however most ads and marketing communications dominating our TV screens and social feeds, seem to focus on the fandom and soccer superstars rather than on real people engaging in the sport in a recreational way. Seems like the right approach, but is it really?

According to research from [iStock](#), a leading e-commerce platform providing premium images, and videos at affordable prices, brands and businesses might be missing on an opportunity to connect the feeling, emotion and action of the professional game to its similarities in recreational football.

Insights from iStock's [VisualGPS](#) creative research, revealed **40% of people feel more motivated to watch/play sports when they see images and videos that focus on the mental, emotional and physical benefits of playing sports, followed by the wish to see "more people like me" as the protagonists of sports stories (35%)**. Still important, but less engaging are people who feel motivated by seeing inspirational action moments of pro athletes (33%) and real-life athletes or fitness experts (31%).

As reported on iStock's free interactive visual trends tool platform, [VisualGPS Insights](#), (built on over 2.6 billion annual search and download queries), over the last 6 months the most popular visuals related to the search term "soccer" solely focus on images and videos that portray professional players or a professional game, thus reflecting a very limited view on how brands are engaging with their consumers during the World Cup.

*"When analyzing the most popular visuals downloaded, the absence of visuals that show ordinary people practicing soccer in a recreational way is striking," said Dr. Rebecca Swift, Global Head of Creative Insights at iStock. "We know during this time audiences want to see professionals and not amateurs, however, as we know from previous World Cups, there is always a longtail or halo effect from these events which filters down to grassroots, and it is at that stage that there is a ton of opportunity to connect the sport to recreational players, amateurs, and ordinary people."*

Some of the factors that stood out for people when being asked about the visual elements depicting

sports or athletes that would motivate them to participate in, and/or watch sports, had to do with the social aspects of it. For many, it is a chance to connect with friends and family, and they see this activity as a space for mental escape and release of stress in the face of real-world problems. In fact, this research revealed that 2 out of 3 people globally recognize that engaging with sports is good for their mental health.

Visual experts agree this could mean a great opportunity for brands and small and medium-sized businesses that want to connect with sports and soccer fans year-round since their marketing budgets can't compete with the world's biggest brands that are sponsoring sporting celebrities such as: Cristiano Ronaldo, Messi or Neymar.

*To help brands and businesses, across all industries, leverage the power of sport to engage with their customers, iStock's visual experts shared three main takeaways:*

### **Be relatable**

It is important to promote genuine settings where people of all ages, gender identities and expressions, body types and ethnicities, from a variety of backgrounds and cultures demonstrate their passion for sport. This is especially important for women, 1 in 3 of whom feel motivated by images and videos of people with a range of body types practicing sports.

### **Consider social connections**

Share scenes where simplicity and passion stand out over the spectacular. Focus on the value of the camaraderie and shared time, where football or sports are the excuse that enables the social meeting and therefore becomes that holistic benefit for the well-being of all the people that is practicing it.

### **Be mindful**

While men are likely to be inspired by professional athletes in action more than other groups, both females and males from all generations connect with visuals that show people motivated by their overall well-being, including the emotional benefits of participating in sports – wanting to see what sports can do for them personally. Choose images and videos with authentic depictions of people with varying degrees of athletic ability or skill that feel more relevant to their personal experience, such as female leaders and coaches or people with disabilities playing a sport.

To find more sport and wellness-related imagery and videos, visit <https://www.istockphoto.com/>.

*Image credit: Tempura/iStock*