

# #Goal! How Fans Around the World Will Watch, Follow and Stream the World Cup

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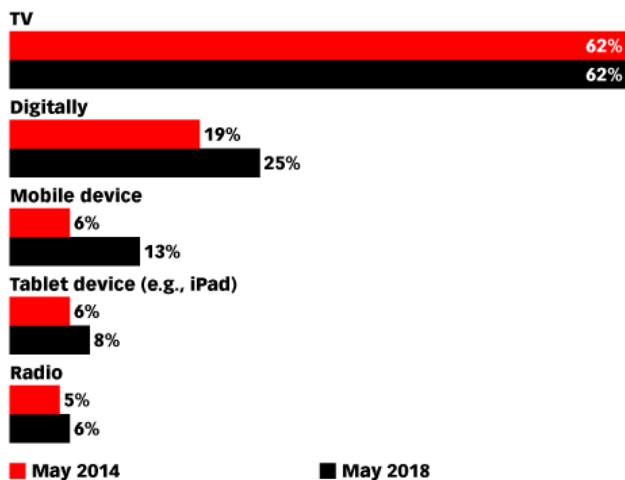
**T**he World Cup comes around once every four years, and when it does, daily routines are shifted to accommodate game viewing.

This year's tournament, which officially kicks off today, offers fans a slew of new streaming options, from exclusive Fox Sports highlights they can view on Twitter, to Snapchat's behind-the-scenes highlights, graphics and reactions from soccer fans across the globe. These changes usher in what eMarketer is dubbing the first "Digital Cup."

According to a June 2018 [Ipsos](#) report, while many internet users worldwide plan to watch the matches on TV, a quarter plan to watch digitally. That's a 6-percentage-point increase in the number of potential digital viewers compared with 2014.

### Ways in Which Internet Users Worldwide Will Watch/Listen to the World Cup, May 2014 & May 2018

% of respondents



Note: 2014 n=15,064; 2018 n=12,207; ages 16-64; among those who are aware of the World Cup  
Source: Ipsos, "Attitudes Towards the FIFA World Cup 2018 in Russia," June 7, 2018

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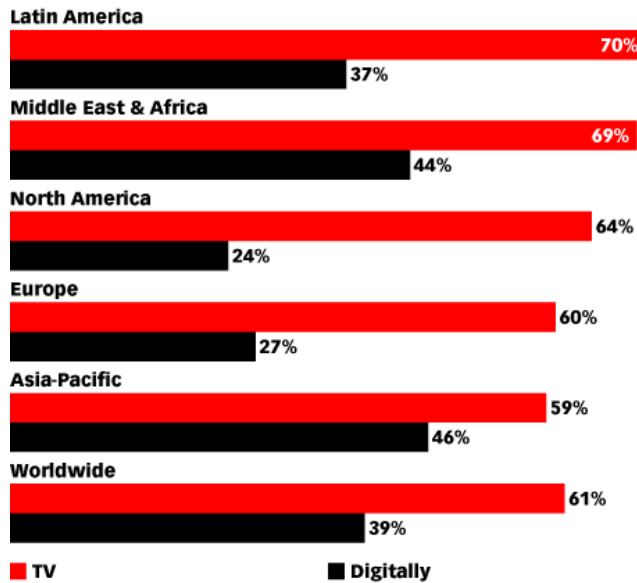
Developing countries are leading the way, with 47% of internet users in China planning to watch the World Cup online, followed by 45% in India and 44% in Saudi Arabia.

It is also worth highlighting that the proportion of global internet users who plan to watch the competition via a mobile device has more than doubled over the past four years, rising from 6% to 13%.

Echoing similar trends on both a global and regional level, a Q4 2017 survey conducted by [GlobalWebIndex](#) found that 39% of internet users around the world watch sports digitally. Of the regions surveyed, Asia-Pacific leads the pack with 46% of internet users viewing digitally, followed by the Middle East and Africa (44%) and Latin America (37%).

### Internet Users Worldwide Who Watch Sports via TV vs. Digitally, by Region, Q4 2017

% of respondents



Note: ages 16-64

Source: GlobalWebIndex as cited in company blog, March 13, 2018

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“Historically, high-demand sports content was available primarily—or exclusively—through linear TV channels. But over the past couple of years, we’ve seen more and more of this content licensed to streaming outlets, aggregators or broadcasters with digital services,” said eMarketer principal analyst Paul Verna.

“As this trend plays out across developing markets, it has accelerated cord-cutting by negating one of the biggest reasons people were staying with their traditional pay TV packages,” he added.

In addition to social and mobile streaming options, many companies also plan to experiment with virtual reality (VR). FIFA **plans** to enhance the World Cup digital experience by allowing viewers to follow matches live in VR as a 360-degree video-on-demand (VOD) experience.

Meanwhile, TV providers like DirecTV will let customers in seven countries in Latin America stream all of the matches live from a mobile app on their smartphones, and watch them in VR. After the games have aired, digital spectators will be able to experience them on-demand

with 180-degree views through the use of VR headsets such as Google Cardboard.

With improved internet connectivity and an uptick in mobile adoption, digital viewership is a key area of growth for sports leagues and broadcasters alike.

“Tailoring the user experience for multiple screens is now a must for sports broadcasters to keep pace with consumer demand for global sports entertainment in these fast-growth markets,” noted Chase Buckle, senior trends analyst at GlobalWebIndex, [in a blog post](#).

The strong sense of national pride that soccer fans feel toward the World Cup—coupled with the sheer number of hours they will spend watching their teams play—will undoubtedly provide a unique opportunity for advertisers to engage with their audience and boost digital ad sales this year.

Unlike most sports in the US, where the action is cut up by commercial breaks, soccer is a high-intensity, high-attention-span, lean-forward endeavor. People don’t tend to tune in casually. *They’re all in.*

With this in mind, Verna said, “World Cup sponsors get a lot of mileage by attaching themselves to the most popular sporting event on the planet. The extension of this event into the digital space only heightens the value of those participating brands.”

Curious to learn more? Tune into the latest episode of eMarketer’s “[Behind the Numbers](#)” podcast as our analysts discuss the implications of the FIFA World Cup on consumer behavior and regional ad spending in Latin America.