

The World Cup Money Study

Six-Chapter Report



DATA LOCKED 3–13 JULY 2026**PUBLISHED** 20 JULY 2026

Study Timeline

3–13 July 2026

The study covers the World Cup's knockout stage, 3–13 July 2026. Each panel was interviewed as of a specific tournament date, answering only with what a fan could know on that day.

3 July 2026

The Jersey, Ad War, and Diaspora Twins panels, and the first Grief Discount wave, were interviewed as of 3 July, the eve of the round of 16.

12 July 2026

The second Grief Discount wave and the Orphan Draft were interviewed as of 12 July, just after the quarterfinals.

13 July 2026

The ticket-holder panel was interviewed as of 13 July, the night before the semifinals.

Intro / Methodology

Synthetic audiences of AI personas with assigned incomes, personalities, and fact-verified tournament diaries, world-clock frozen at real moments of the FIFA World Cup 2026. Directional research, not population polling. All counts reported as X of N, never percentages. Chapters 1 through 6 analyzed and independently audited.

Jersey

The Test

Official World Cup shirts cost around €100–160. Street copies cost €25. We wanted to know what fans would really do: pay the full price, wait for a cheaper way to get the real one, buy the copy, or skip the shirt completely. So we asked them — and let them explain.

Will fans pay official World Cup shirt prices — and when does the €25 counterfeit become the rational purchase?



Audience:

67 Europe-resident synthetic fans across five tribes (16 parents, 15 budget young-adults, 12 collectors, 12 purists, 12 fashion casuals), 16 national fanbases, data locked 3 July. Each was asked whether shirts had come up at home, shown their team's real price card (fan version €100–110, authentic €150–160, counterfeits €20–30), then asked what happens before the final, their personal price ceiling, the conditions under which a copy enters the house, and who they'd buy for before themselves.

ANALYSIS 1 - THE €100 OFFICIAL-SHIRT CLIFF

Where does official-shirt demand break?

The price-demand curve from 67 coded interviews, with the counterfeit and official fan-price bands made explicit.



Stated Current Ceiling By Fan Tribe

No tribe median reaches the €100 lower edge of the official fan-price band.

● Collectors	● Purists	● Fashion casuals	● Parents	● Budget young adults
€82.5	€62.5	€60	€55	€50

KEY READ

3 of 67

reach €100. Only 1 reaches €109.99. By contrast, the €20-30 copy band sits below 66 of 67 stated ceilings.

CODED INTERVIEWS

First explicit current ceiling in Q3; directional synthetic panel.

n=67 | Europe | data locked 3 July

Finding

Median firm ceiling: **€60**. Willingness falls from 66 of 67 at €30 to 15 at €80 to 3 of 67 at the official price. Segmentation: 9 official buyers, 18 aspirers, **34 counterfeit pragmatists**, **6 abstainers**. Zero new full-price commitments after seeing the card.

ANALYSIS 2 - THE GLORY PREMIUM

A semifinal adds €10 to the median shirt ceiling.

Same 25 personas, re-interviewed after France, England, Spain or Argentina reached the semifinal.

BASELINE MEDIAN

€60

SEMIFINAL MEDIAN

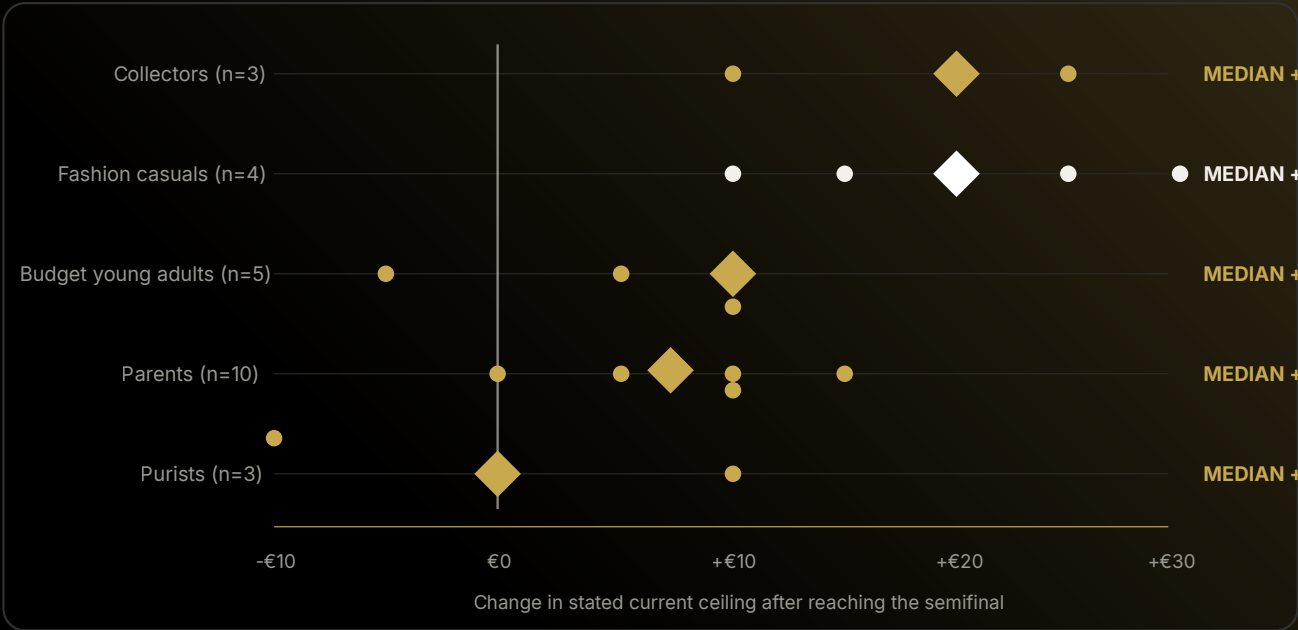
€70

RAISED CEILING

19 / 25

STILL BELOW €100

21 / 25



INDIVIDUAL DIRECTION

19 UP 4 SAME 2 DOWN

19 UP

4 SAME

2 DOWN

KEY READ

19 of 25

raised their ceiling. The lift was strongest among collectors and fashion casuals (median +€20 each); purists showed no median movement.

CODED INTERVIEWS

First explicit current ceiling in Q3; directional synthetic panel. n=25 paired | segment cells n=3-10 | data locked 3 July + 12 July

Finding

The 25 fans whose teams genuinely reached the semifinals were re-interviewed at a 12 July clock: **19 of 25 raised their ceiling** (median +€10), 4 held, 2 fell — but only 3 crossed the official price line. When demand rises, it flows to others first: 34 of 67 put a child ahead of themselves.

Everyone Has a Price

The Test

Imagine winning a \$60 ticket to the World Cup final in a lottery. Would you go — or sell it if someone offered you real money? We kept raising the offer, from \$300 up to \$5,785, to find the exact point where each fan finally says yes.

What cash amount turns a once-in-a-lifetime experience into an asset?



Audience:

24 synthetic fans, each holding a real \$60 Supporter Entry lottery ticket to the final, data locked 13 July (semis eve).
Design: 12 income-matched pairs differing only in team fate (alive vs eliminated), across tight, stretched and comfortable budgets, plus a Newark resident as zero-travel control. Each walked a six-offer cash ladder (\$300 → \$5,785, FIFA's own cheapest resale seat) before any opinion questions, then gave a FIFA-fairness verdict and answered the mirror question.

THE FINAL-TICKET SELL CURVE

No one sold at 10× face value. At 67×, 20 of 24 did.

The first accepted cash offer from holders of a \$60 lottery ticket to the World Cup final.



KEY READ

20 of 24

had sold by \$4,000. Every eliminated-team holder was gone; one-third of the still-alive group continued to hold even at \$5,785.

CODED INTERVIEWS

First explicit/probable acceptance in Q2; threshold buckets, not exact valuations.

n=24 | 12 matched pairs | data locked 13 July

Finding

Nobody sells at \$300 or \$600. Two have sold by \$1,200, 11 by \$2,500, 20 by \$4,000. **Four of 24 refuse everything — at 96× face value.** The team-survival premium is the cleanest result in the study: **the alive-team fan held out longer in 11 of 12 matched pairs** (1 tie, 0 reversals). The Newark control sold at \$2,500 despite zero travel cost — the hold-out is the match, not the logistics.

THE TEAM-SURVIVAL PREMIUM

Keeping the dream alive added one full offer rung.

Matched on income tier and fan archetype; compare the first accepted rung in each pair.

ALIVE HELD LONGER

11 / 12

SAME RUNG

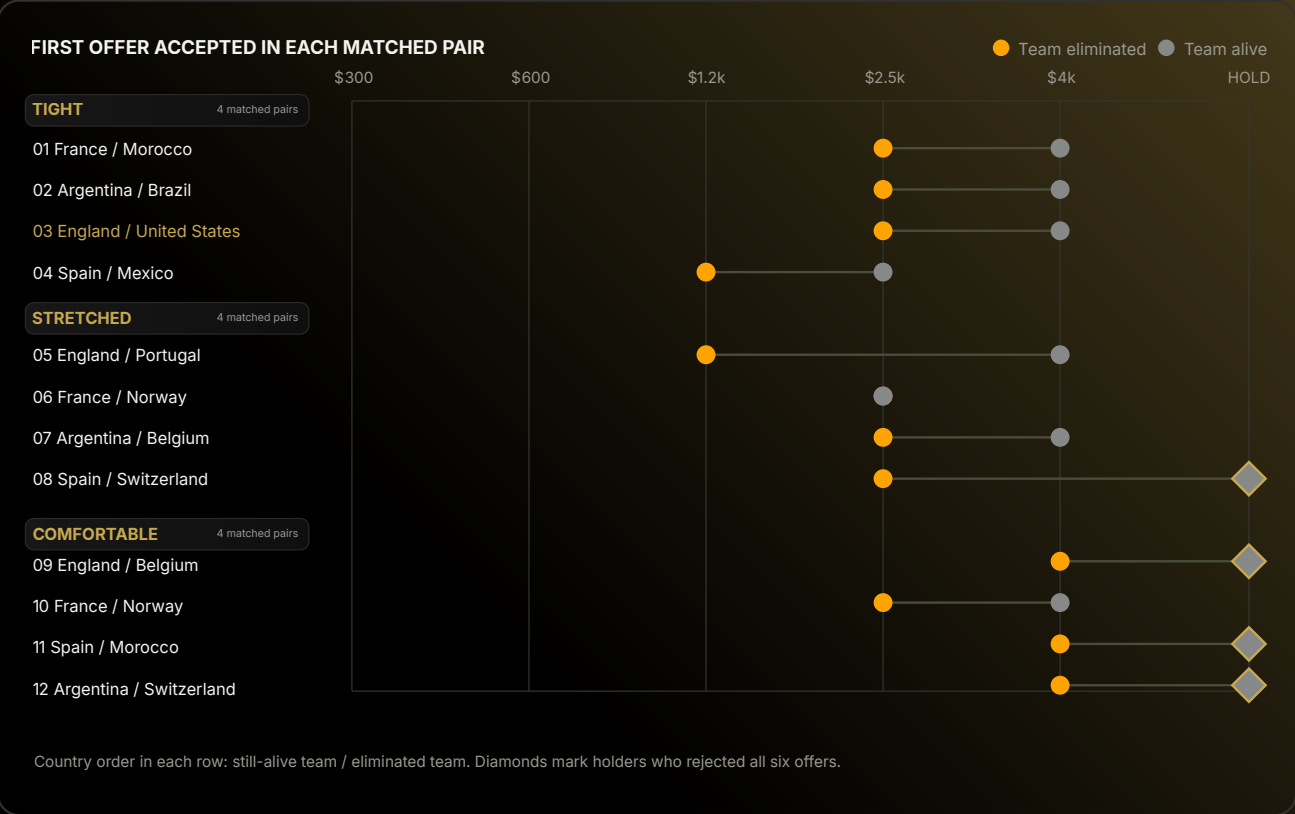
1 / 12

ELIMINATED HELD LONGER

0 / 12

MEDIAN FIRST YES

\$4k vs \$2.5k



NEWARK CONTROL

\$2,500

The eliminated US fan lives 25 minutes from MetLife and has zero travel cost, yet still sells at \$2,500. Her matched alive-team counterpart waits until \$4,000.

CODED INTERVIEWS

First explicit/probable acceptance in Q2; threshold buckets, not exact valuations.

n=24 | 12 matched pairs | data locked 13 July

Finding

Will cross-tabulate each holder's own accepted offer against their stated FIFA verdict and code the mirror-question defenses into principled holders, conflicted sellers, market-consistents, and reluctant pragmatists.

The Grief Discount

The Test

When your team gets knocked out of the World Cup, what happens to the money you were planning to spend on it? We asked the same 67 fans the same three money questions twice: once while every team was still alive, and again after the real results came in.

Does victory add more spending than elimination destroys?



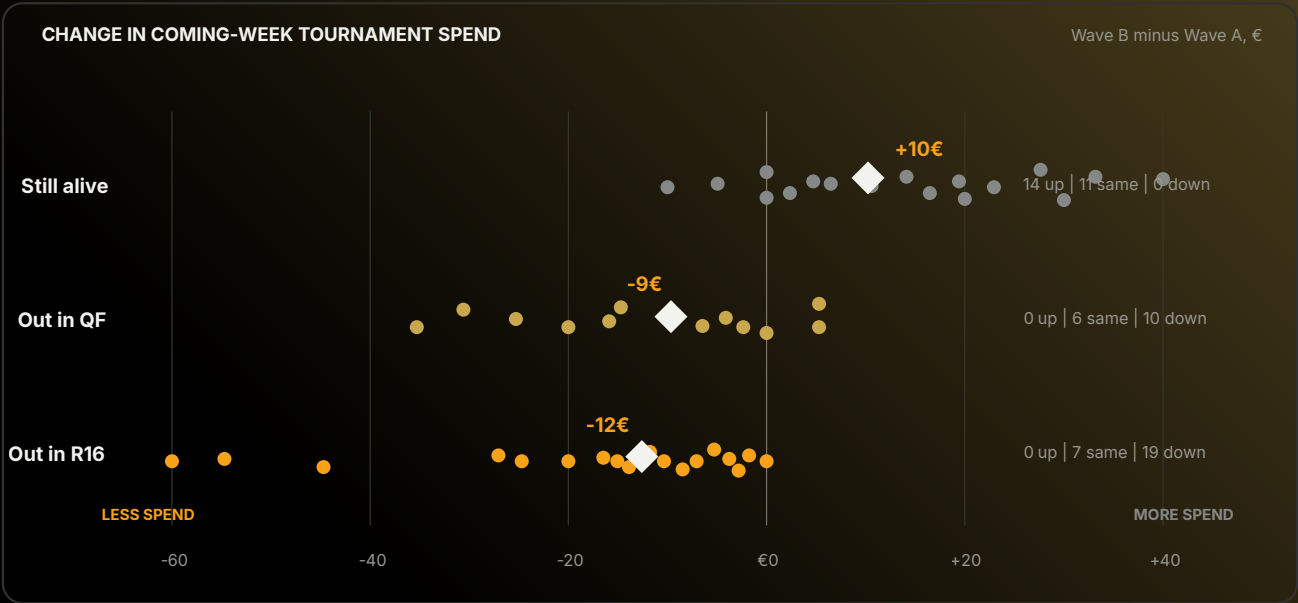
Audience:

The same 67 fans, interviewed twice with a byte-identical instrument: 3 July (all teams alive) and 12 July (after each diary absorbed the team's real fate). By Wave B: 25 alive, 16 out in the quarterfinals, 26 out in the round of 16. Three exact-euro measures each wave: shirt ceiling, coming-week cost, final-weekend spend.

THE FATE EFFECT

One result split the wallet in opposite directions.

Same 67 synthetic fans before the round of 16 and after the quarterfinals.
Dots show each person's change in the coming week's tournament spend.



MEDIAN PAIRED CHANGE ACROSS ALL THREE MONEY QUESTIONS			
	STILL ALIVE	OUT IN QF	OUT IN R16
SHIRT CEILING	€0	€0	€0
COMING WEEK	+10€	-9€	-12€
FINAL WEEKEND	-20€	-10€	-12€

KEY READ

42 / 42

eliminated fans held or cut their next-week spend.
14 of 25 survivors raised it.

PAIRED INTERVIEWS

First stated euro amount in Q2-Q4; paired change is Wave B minus Wave A. n=67 | Wave A: 3 July | Wave B: 12 July

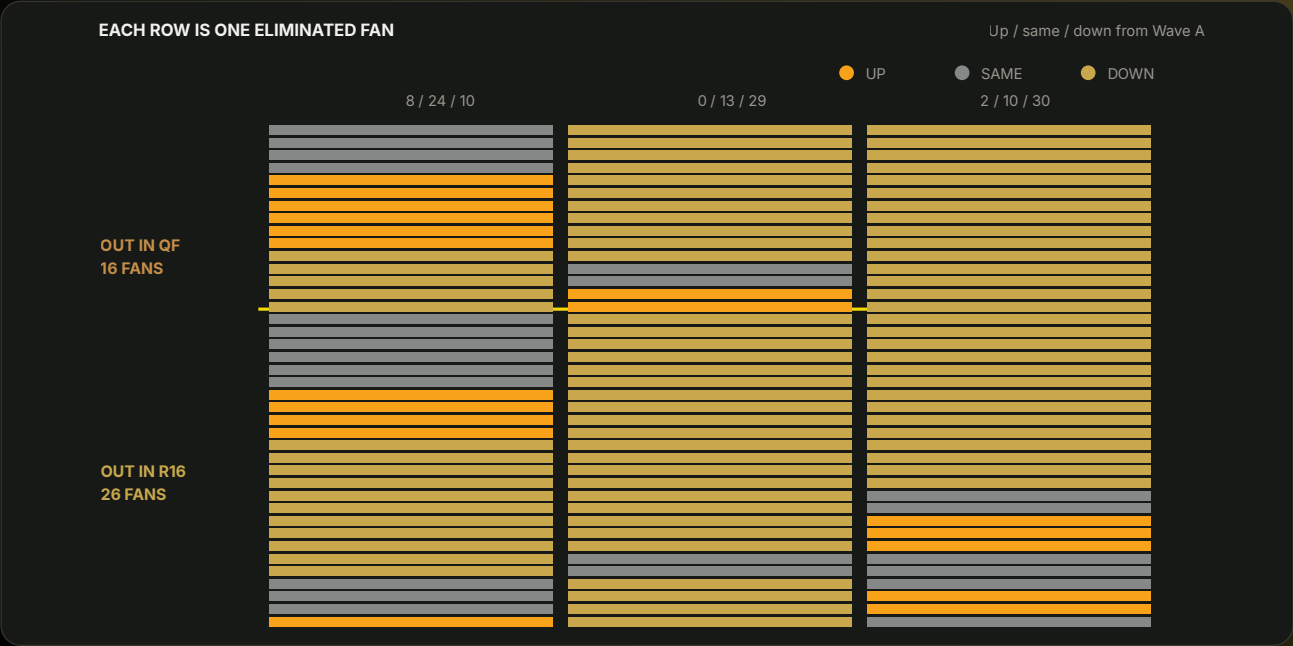
Finding

The effect concentrates in the coming week: alive +€10 median (14 raised, 0 fell) versus -€9 median for QF-eliminated and -€12 for R16-eliminated. Zero of 42 eliminated fans raised their coming-week spend. Shirt ceilings didn't move: median Δ €0 in every group. Final-weekend spend fell for everyone, alive fans most (-€20), a shared as-the-date-nears revision that only the control arm exposed. Not attributed to grief.

WHERE THE MONEY WENT

Elimination cut the occasion before it cut the identity.

Among the 42 eliminated fans, experience budgets fell far more consistently than the value they placed on their team shirt.



KEY READ

22 / 42

cut both experience budgets.
In 32 / 42 cases, the shirt ceiling held or rose.

PAIRED INTERVIEWS

First stated euro amount in Q2-Q4; paired change is Wave B minus Wave A.

n=42 eliminated | QF out: 16 | R16 out: 26

Finding

Among the 42 eliminated: **17 party cancellers** (shirt holds, occasion dies — no unattached group exists), **8 consolation shirts** (raised their ceiling after going out), 7 clean exits, 3 identity retreats, 3 unmoved, 2 one-last-party, 2 mixed. The adoption cross-link found no unattached impossible for the best reason: **42 of 42 adopted a surviving team** — no unattached group exists.

The Orphan Draft

The Test

Who inherits a fan when their country goes out?



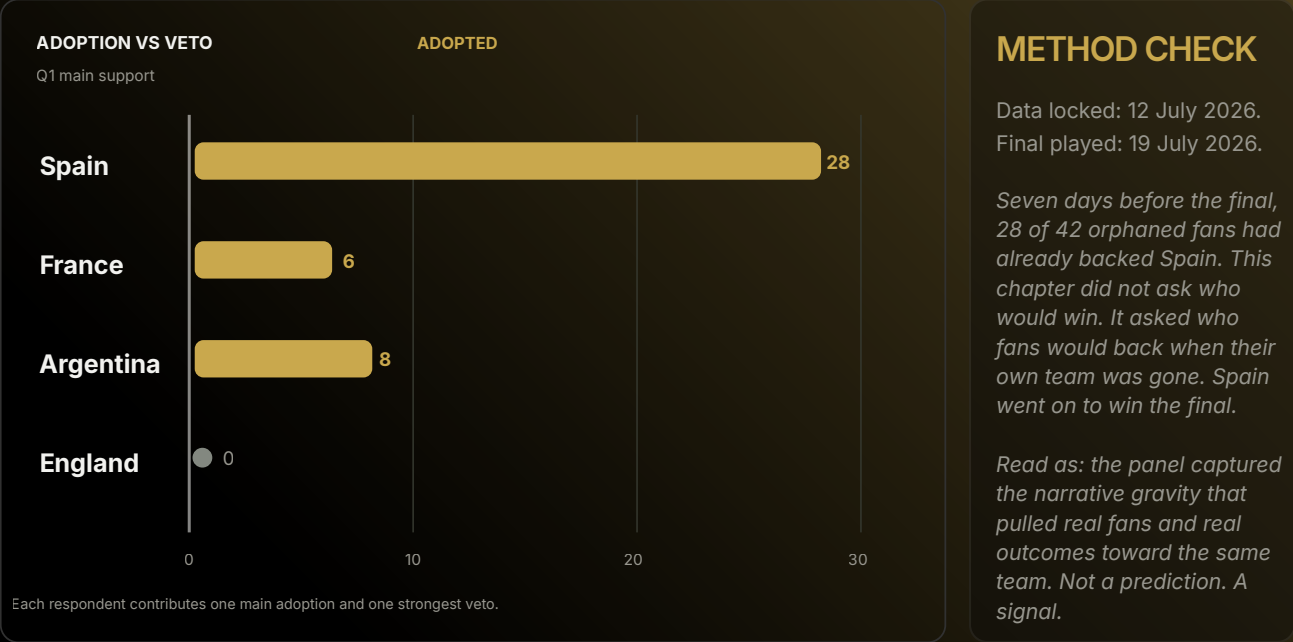
Audience:

The 42 orphaned fans as of 12 July, shown a neutral remaining-fixtures card (France, Spain, Argentina, England). Built-in natural experiment: Stratum A (30, their eliminator still alive) versus Stratum B (12, eliminator also eliminated). Fans asked to name their main adopted team from the remaining four.

THE ADOPTION MAP

Spain inherited the neutrals.

42 eliminated synthetic fans named who they would back — and who they most wanted to lose.



KEY READ

28 / 42

backed Spain.
England received no first-choice adoptions.

CODED INTERVIEWS

Q1 main preference | n=42 | Stratum A: 30 | Stratum B: 12 | data locked 12 July

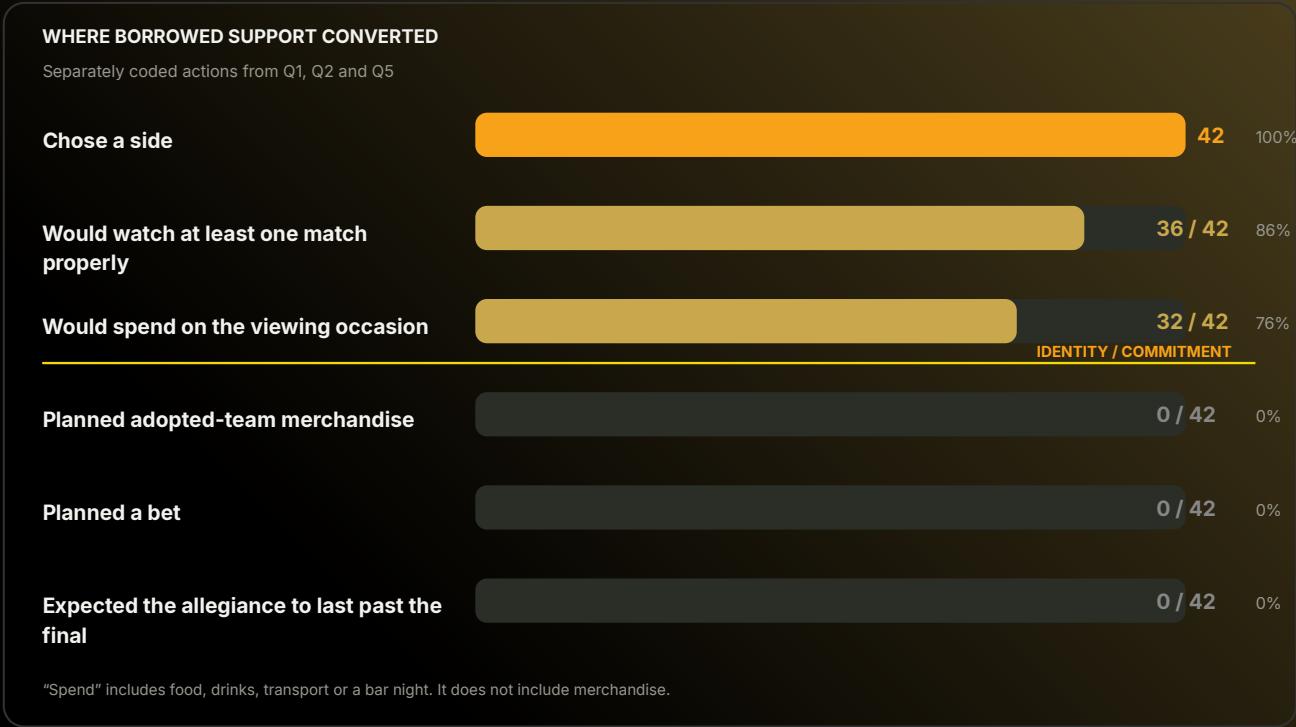
PARTIAL

Audited draft codes show Spain inherited 28 of 42 orphaned fans, Argentina 8, France 6, and England 0. Nobody stayed unattached. Veto analysis, Stratum B revenge-object coding, and follow-through data are held for a follow-up release.

THE ADOPTION-TO-ACTION GAP

Fans borrowed a team. They did not borrow an identity.

Support converted into attention and small match-night spending — then stopped before merchandise, betting or lasting loyalty.



SYNTHETIC INTERVIEW EXCERPT

"That's just match-night money, not fan money."

— Eliminated Colombia supporter

SYNTHETIC INTERVIEW EXCERPT

"The borrowed support ends with the final."

— Eliminated Switzerland supporter

KEY READ

0 / 42

planned to buy another team's shirt or scarf. The money followed the occasion — not the allegiance.

CODED INTERVIEWS

Action categories coded separately, not as a cumulative funnel | n=42

METHOD NOTE

The 42 orphaned fans are staged through the lean → committed watching → changed plans → money → post-final persistence chain. Revenge-based adoptions are compared to style- and player-based adoptions for conversion strength.

The Ad War

The Test

Nike, adidas and LEGO all made big World Cup ads. We described each ad to fans with the brand names hidden and asked: who made this? Then we revealed the answers and asked which ad they'd watch again — and which one would actually make them spend money.

Do the tournament's flagship campaigns actually work — and for whom?



Audience:

95 synthetic fans across three markets (US 40, including 12 first-World-Cup newcomers; Europe 30; Latin America 25), all five tribes per region, data locked 3 July. Stimuli: parity-controlled written briefs of Nike's 'Rip the Script,' adidas' 'Backyard Legends,' and LEGO's 'Everyone Wants a Piece,' presented first masked (brands and slogans stripped; casts kept), in rotated order, then revealed for decode and personal reaction, ending with two forced rankings: which they'd rewatch versus which moves their money.

LOGO-OFF BRAND DNA

The logos disappeared. The brands did not.

Ninety-five synthetic fans saw the three campaign concepts with brand names and slogans removed.

MASKED ATTRIBUTION ACCURACY

Correct brand guesses

● ADIDAS

95 / 95

identified correctly

WHAT GAVE IT AWAY

Endorser constellation

Messi, Beckham, Zidane, Bad Bunny

Street-football mythology

● NIKE

95 / 95

identified correctly

WHAT GAVE IT AWAY

Athlete + culture roster

Ronaldo, LeBron, Travis Scott

Rebellion and spectacle

● LEGO

95 / 95

identified correctly

WHAT GAVE IT AWAY

Product category

Bricks, figures, sets, mosaics

Clean, playful execution

KEY READ

285 / 285

brand attributions were correct.
The cast, category and creative tone carried more recognition than any visible logo.

THE INTERPRETATION

This was not a difficult guessing game.

LEGO's product category was visible even without a name. Adidas and Nike were decoded through their celebrity ecosystems and familiar creative language. The stronger conclusion is not simply 'high recall.' It is that these brands have built recognizable worlds around themselves.

Measurement boundary: Concept-level recognition from written briefs, not unaided recall after viewing the complete films.

MASKED ATTRIBUTION

Masked parity-controlled written briefs; brands revealed only after attribution.

n=95 | US 40 | Europe 30 | Latin America 25 | data locked 3 July

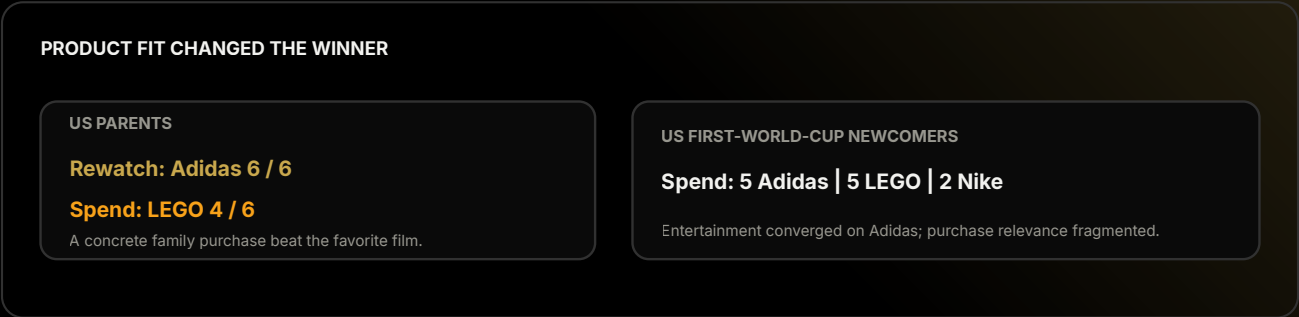
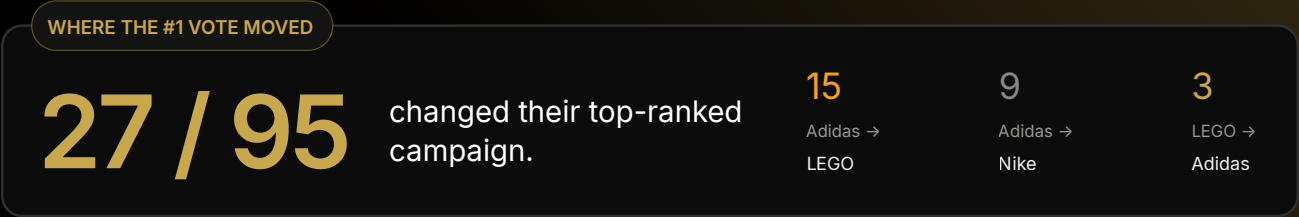
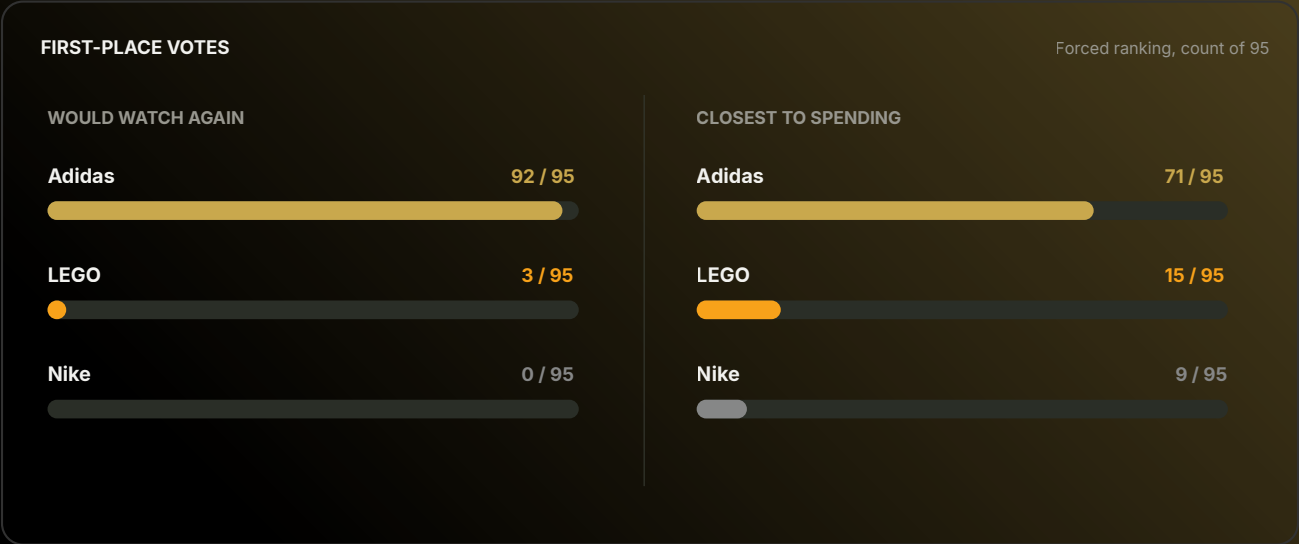
METHOD NOTE

Masked attribution accuracy is measured across the 3×3 brand grid. Giveaway cues are coded to isolate 'misattributed admiration' (liking an ad while crediting a competitor). Newcomers versus lifelong fans is the key cut. Interpretation boundary: concept-level encoding, not film effectiveness.

THE REWATCH-WALLET GAP

Adidas won the replay. The wallet was harder.

Fans ranked the same three campaigns twice: first for watch-again appeal, then for spending influence.



FORCED RANKINGS Masked parity-controlled written briefs; brands revealed only after attribution. n=95 | US 40 | Europe 30 | Latin America 25 | data locked 3 July

METHOD NOTE

The entertainment-vs-spending transition matrix (full-funnel winner, entertainment trap, quiet converter, creative miss) is built with coded reversal reasons. Timely, since both finalists wear adidas.

Diaspora Twins

The Test

Does living close to the World Cup change how much a fan spends on it? We built pairs of near-identical fans — same team, same income, sometimes the same family — where one twin lives in Europe and one lives near the stadiums, and asked both the same money questions.

What is living near the World Cup worth when heritage, income, and fandom are held constant?



Audience:

48 synthetic fans in 24 matched pairs across 12 heritages. Each pair has one twin in Europe and one in the host region (US or Canada), matched on tribe, income cell, age, and gender. Roughly half are literal relatives. Data locked 3 July. Both twins answered identically: how the tournament shows up locally, coming-week spend, in-person attendance and what stopped them, the all-in maximum to be inside one of their team's knockout matches, shirt ceiling, and final-weekend plans.

THE EVERYDAY PROXIMITY EFFECT

The host region raised the weekly tournament bill.

Same heritage, income tier, age and gender — but one twin lived in the US or Canada, beside the tournament.

MATCHED-PAIR RESULT

HOST-REGION TWINS SPENT MORE

19 of 24

planned to spend more in the coming week.

MEDIAN WEEKLY SPEND

EU €47.5
HOST €60

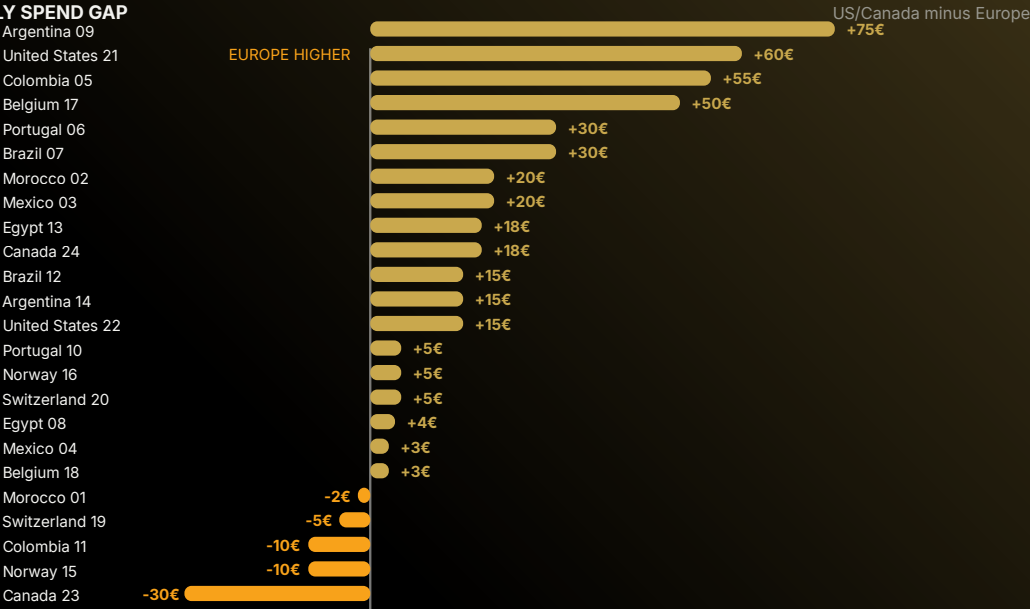
Europe versus US/Canada median.

MEDIAN PAIR GAP

+€15

Host twin minus Europe twin, within the same pair.

PAIR-BY-PAIR WEEKLY SPEND GAP



WHAT DID NOT MOVE: THE SHIRT CEILING

EUROPE MEDIAN

€35

US/CANADA MEDIAN

€35

8 host higher

12 Europe higher

4 ties

Proximity changed food, drinks, transit and watch plans.
It did not create broader willingness to pay more for the shirt.

WITHIN-PAIR GAPS

Q2 selected honest weekly estimate; Q5 explicit shirt ceiling.

24 matched pairs | 48 interviews | data locked 3 July

METHOD NOTE

The unit of analysis is the within-pair gap on the all-in match price: median pair difference, count of host-higher versus Europe-higher pairs, and full range. The shirt ceiling serves as the built-in placebo check. Proximity should move access, not identity.

THE PRICED-OUT HOST PARADOX

Closer to the World Cup. Still outside the stadium.

Proximity made match travel easier to imagine. It did not make the full ticket day affordable.

FROM INTEREST TO ATTENDANCE

EUROPE TWINS

21 / 24

checked match tickets and/or actual match travel

0 / 24

attended a stadium match

US/CANADA TWINS

24 / 24

checked match tickets and/or actual match travel

0 / 24

attended a stadium match

The funnel stopped before the turnstile in both regions.

THE COUNTERINTUITIVE ALL-IN CEILING

When forced to name a maximum for ticket, travel and everything else:

EUROPE MEDIAN

€550

US/CANADA MEDIAN

€215

PAIR RESULT

22 of 24

Europe ceiling higher

This is not a Europe passion premium. Europe respondents were pricing flights and hotels into the answer.
Host-region respondents were picturing shorter, more actionable local or regional trips.

KEY READ

The seat was rarely the only problem.

Ticket price, fees, transport, work, childcare and the return journey combined into one decision.
Hosting created atmosphere and local spending — not stadium conversion.

Method note: Q4 values are forced stated ceilings, not observed market prices.

ACCESS FUNNEL

Directional synthetic-panel findings;
matched pairs are the unit of comparison.

24 matched pairs | 48 interviews | data locked 3 July

METHOD NOTE

Each twin's chain is traced from local exposure → pricing research → attendance → spend.
Barriers are coded and pairs sorted into archetypes: activated hosts, priced-out hosts, remote superfans, ambient-only locals.



Articos

SYNTHETIC AUDIENCE RESEARCH