

From Stadiums to Screens: Coca-Cola's Sportswashing at the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup

Football is the world's most popular sport, drawing in billions of fans. The 2025 FIFA Club World Cup captured over 2.5 billion viewers around the world. Coca-Cola—one of the largest producers of sweetened beverages—has leveraged its decades-long partnership with FIFA to reach audiences across men's, women's and youth tournaments. Companies regularly use sports sponsorship as part of their broader marketing strategies to reach and engage audiences. That reach now extends beyond stadiums and TV screens and into social media feeds, streaming platforms and mobile. Since 2019, Coca-Cola has increasingly allocated more of its \$4 billion annual marketing budget to digital media.

Online platforms are more difficult to monitor and regulate than traditional media, posing significant challenges for protecting children from unhealthy food and beverage marketing. Since children follow, watch and aspire to be athletes, marketing through sport is inherently going to reach young audiences. Repeated exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing drives higher consumption of such products, increases the likelihood of choosing these products and strengthens preferences for them over healthier options. WHO has called for comprehensive digital marketing restrictions on unhealthy products in response to the increasingly digital marketing landscape.

A new report documents the scale of Coca-Cola's branding on social media during the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, illustrating why regulating sports sponsorship must be included in any efforts to protect children from unhealthy product marketing.

Big Soda's Sports Sponsorship Visibility Is Amplified Through Social Media

In "From Stadiums to Screens: Coca-Cola's Sportswashing at the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup," Canary researchers tracked and analyzed Coca-Cola's branding exposure across social media platforms during the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in Mexico, Brazil and the United States. **A total of 795 social media posts containing Coca-Cola branding were analyzed and were associated with an estimated 3.6 billion digital impressions.**



The Harm of Marketing

- 1 in 5 children globally are overweight or living with obesity, and diabetes and other diet-related diseases are rising.
- Sweetened beverages are a major contributor to these diseases, and marketing of these products plays a critical role in shaping consumption.
- Children are exposed to high volumes of digital marketing for unhealthy food and sweetened beverages. Evidence shows this marketing influences their preferences and consumption habits from a young age.
- Global sports sponsorship is a powerful channel for promoting these products. Brands, such as Coca-Cola, invest heavily in the FIFA World Cup, a sports mega-event with a large youth audience. Sponsorship-linked marketing extends far beyond the stadium through social media.
- During the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, 795 social media posts containing Coca-Cola branding generated an estimated 3.6 billion digital impressions, dramatically expanding the reach of the company's advertising.
- This scale of exposure has intensified calls from advocates and individuals in a global movement encouraging governments to adopt comprehensive marketing policies that protect the public, including young people, from marketing that drives consumption of unhealthy products linked to diet-related diseases.

What is Canary?

Canary is a real-time media monitoring and reporting service that harnesses AI tools alongside expert analysis to identify emerging threats in the marketing of unhealthy products.

Key Findings:

1. Immersive Marketing

Analysis revealed that **Coca-Cola created branded fan zones and retail activations designed to be shared on social media.** The real marketing power of these spaces comes not from the physical events themselves, but from how widely photos and videos are shared across social media.

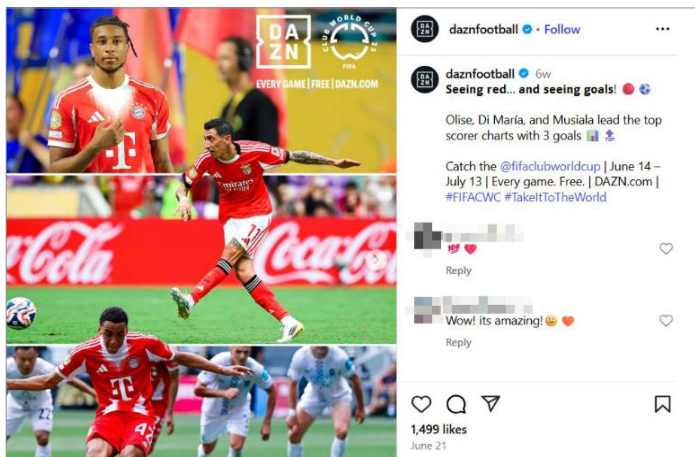
2. From TV to Social Media: Extending Brand Visibility

Online visibility of Coca-Cola branding came largely from logos embedded in match footage reshared by broadcasters and commentators on social media platforms, rather than solely from standalone ads. Up to 79% of Coca-Cola-related posts captured in each country were posted by sports broadcasters, increasing brand visibility beyond live audiences.

While broadcast or streaming advertising reaches viewers once during a match, digital media transforms in-stadium logos into perpetual, multiplied exposure—allowing brands to repeatedly reach new audiences. This broadcast-to-digital pathway illustrates how modern sports sponsorship is designed for cross-platform amplification.

3. Strategic Brand Placement for Social Media Sharing

71% of posts featured Coca-Cola branding embedded in match highlights and post-match interviews, including athlete and coach interviews that prominently featured bottles of Powerade, a Coca-Cola product, indicating that event-based brand placement can generate incidental visibility when match coverage is later shared online.



Source: daznfootball via Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLKc6RRtva3/>

4. Appeals to the Emotion and Passion of Football

63% of posts with Coca-Cola branding highlighted celebrations, team pride and dramatic athletic moments. This is an example of how companies connect their brands to the audience's emotions.

5. Youth Appeal

Marketing that reflects youth culture, including **memes, player highlights and posts featuring young people**, was shared on social media where younger audiences spend time. Repeated exposure to food and beverage marketing is associated with greater brand awareness and favorable perceptions among children.

Why This Matters Now

The 2026 FIFA World Cup in June and July is projected to be the most-watched sporting event in history, with FIFA estimating 6 billion fans engaging with the tournament globally. Food and beverage marketing tied to the event will likely achieve unprecedented visibility unless safeguards are strengthened, heightening concerns about children's and adolescents' exposure to products associated with noncommunicable disease risk. This report calls for strengthened regulatory measures ahead of the tournament.

None of This Is New: Big Tobacco's Playbook, Revised

Just like Big Tobacco, Big Soda uses "sportswashing" tactics to link unhealthy products to the world's most popular game. FIFA banned tobacco sponsorships in 1986, yet tobacco- and nicotine-related promotions continued online during the last World Cup. Forty years later, sweetened beverages, which contribute to 11 million diet-related preventable deaths each year, face no such restrictions. The lesson from tobacco is not simply that sponsorship can be restricted, but that marketing systems adapt when regulation targets only the most visible forms of promotion.

A Call to Action!

1. Implement Comprehensive National Marketing Regulations

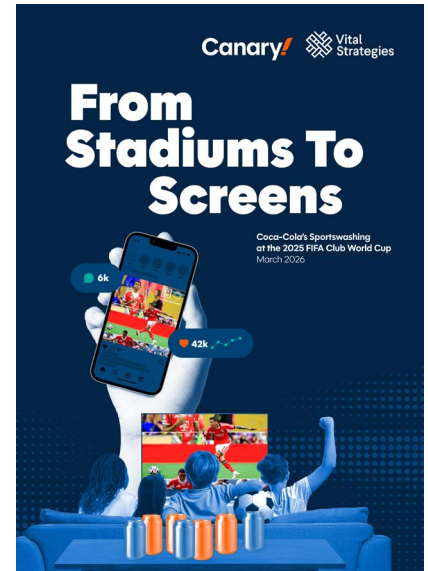
Governments must create and enforce marketing regulations on the physical and digital environments to which children and adolescents are exposed, including sports (a major loophole in some existing regulations).

2. Ban Unhealthy Product Sponsorships in Global Sports

FIFA and other sports governing bodies should ban all forms of sponsorship and advertising for products that harm health, including sweetened beverages.

3. Expose Sportswashing and Build Public Demand for Action

Public health groups must expose sportswashing tactics, help the public recognize them and amplify voices of public health professionals who oppose these sponsorships.



About Canary!

Canary is a real-time media monitoring and reporting service that harnesses AI tools and expert analysis to identify trends in marketing of harmful products, such as tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food and beverages, and informs regulatory action. For more information on our methodology, visit our [website](#).

About Vital Strategies

Canary is a project of Vital Strategies, a public health organization that partners with governments and local organizations to tackle the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases and injuries, using data and evidence to assess health and environmental threats and to move policy, practices and people. Our team of 400+ includes epidemiologists, policy experts, communicators, data analysts and others who work in 80+ countries around the world.

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