

# SPORTS ON YOUTUBE

An Insights Report By Pixability



## Introduction

The sports category is one of YouTube's largest, clocking in at more than 1T all-time views as of October 2021. To understand the space, Pixability's insights team took a look at sports content on the platform, hoping to uncover:

- What types of sports content are people watching on the platform?
- How is the sports category evolving on YouTube?
- What can brands do to best reach sports fans on YouTube?

With these insights in hand, brand and agency marketers will be able to take advantage of the massive sports category on YouTube, and reach and engage sports fans around the content they love.

For a deeper dive into insights around the sports space on YouTube, [contact us](#).

## SPORTS ON YOUTUBE: THE HIGHLIGHTS

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# 1 TRILLION VIEWS

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**28.3M**  
Total Videos

**59K**  
Total Channels

**95%**  
Average  
Favorability

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**1.71%**  
Average  
Engagement  
Rate

**20.2%**  
YoY Growth from  
2020-2021

\*All-time sports space stats on YouTube

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SECTION 01

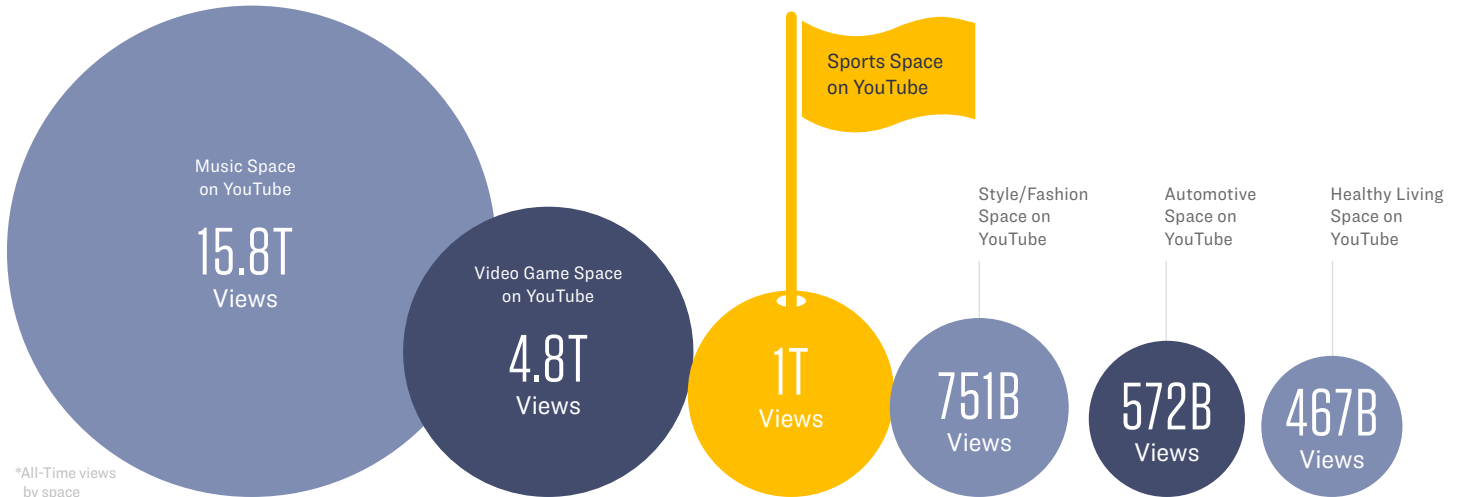
# SPORTS CONTENT ON YOUTUBE

## SECTION 1: SPORTS CONTENT ON YOUTUBE

# Sports Is Bigger Than 70% Of Content Categories On YouTube

The sports space is larger than 18 of the 26 major content categories on YouTube. That's more views than even fashion, automotive, and healthy living — all wildly popular YouTube categories in their own right.

All of these content spaces can play a part in helping a sports brand engage with audiences, particularly music and video game content as we'll show later.



\*All-Time views by space



## SECTION 1: SPORTS CONTENT ON YOUTUBE

# Here's Who Is Making Content That Drives Reach And Engagement In Sports On YouTube



Sponsors, activewear, and retailers are active in the sports space.

**Example:**

- Adidas
- Nike
- Dick's Sporting Goods



Sports leagues and professional teams churn out lots of content for their official YouTube channels.

**Example:**

- NFL
- NBA
- UFC



Sports publishers turn to YouTube to drive viewership.

**Example:**

- ESPN
- Fox Sports



User-generated content also drives a massive viewership in the sports space.

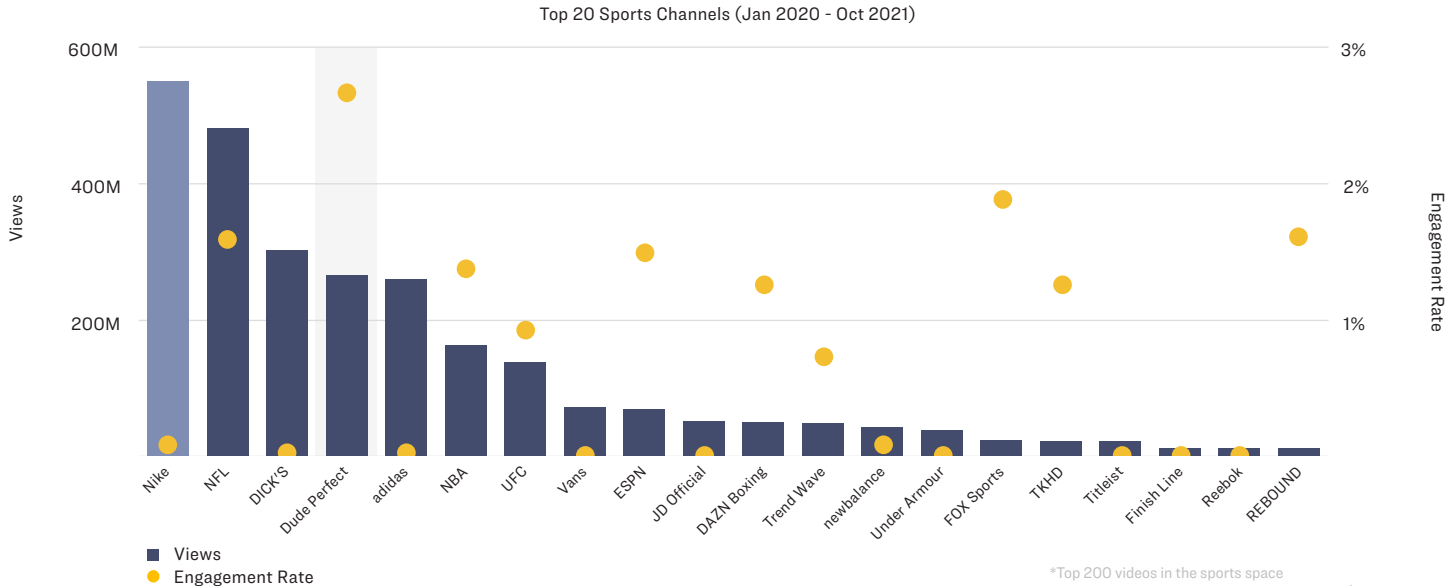
**Example:**

- Dude Perfect
- REBOUND

## SECTION 1: SPORTS CONTENT ON YOUTUBE

# Nike Earns Most Views, While Creator Dude Perfect Has Highest Engagement Rate

The fact that a user-generated content (UGC) channel is one of the top channels in terms of views and is the top in engagement should highlight to advertisers they shouldn't be afraid of advertising on brand suitable UGC.



\*Top 200 videos in the sports space  
Engagement Rate: Likes+Dislikes+Comments/Total Views



## SECTION 1: SPORTS CONTENT ON YOUTUBE

# Different Types Of Highlights Content Makes Up More Than Half Of Views In Sports Space

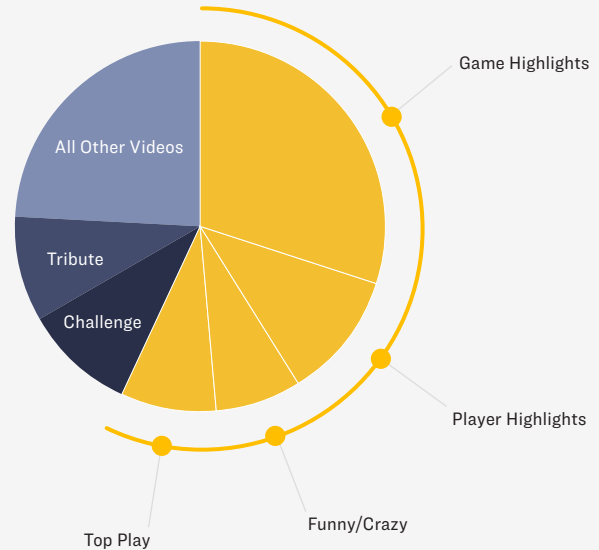
Among the most viewed sports videos since the beginning of 2020, nearly 57% were highlight videos. This consisted of Game Highlights, Player Highlights, Funny/Crazy Sports Moments, and Top Play Highlights.

Game Highlights, such as [49ers vs. Chiefs | Super Bowl LIV Game Highlights](#), had the highest share of top videos, not including ads, at 30.1%.

**Takeaway: Brands who sponsor athletes should capitalize by creating highlight videos of their best plays.**

57%

Of the most viewed sports content were highlights videos



\*Top 200 videos in the sports space

## SECTION 1: SPORTS CONTENT ON YOUTUBE

# The NFL Leads Other Leagues In Views, With The NBA Close Behind As Golf Rises To Distant Third

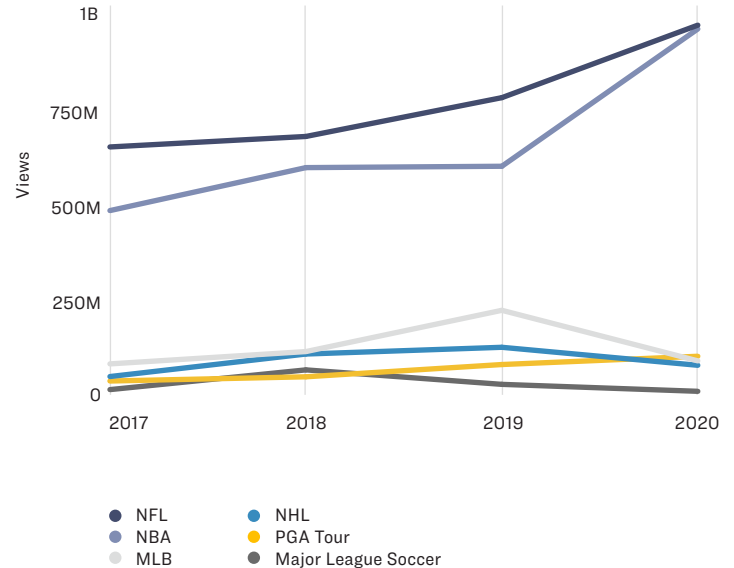
Since eclipsing the MLB in the early 2000s, the NFL has remained the most popular sport in America — as such, the league draws the highest viewership on YouTube, but the NBA is close behind.

In 2020, the PGA Tour earned more views than the MLB and NHL, likely because golf suffered fewer disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Takeaway: Football and basketball content is hugely popular with consumers on YouTube. Targeting content related to these sports can help drive reach and engagement.**

League Channel Views by Year



\*league YouTube channel stats





## SECTION 1: SPORTS CONTENT ON YOUTUBE

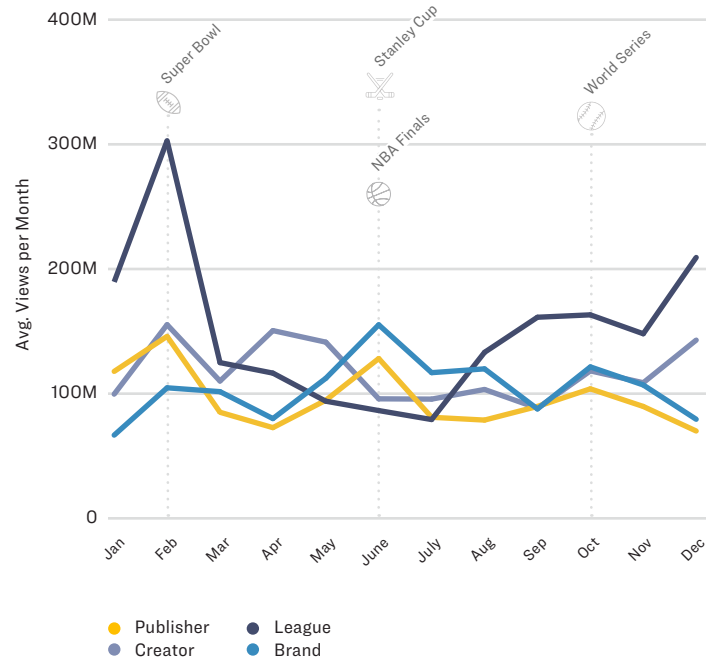
# Viewers Watch Sports Content Throughout The Year, But Tentpole Events Drive Spikes

Sports content sees spikes in viewership around tentpole events like the Super Bowl, other championships and playoffs, and season openers, but overall sports content attracts a large viewership consistently throughout the year — for example, creator content sees just as high of an average viewership in April as it does during the Super Bowl.



**Takeaway: While sports content presents opportunities for advertisers throughout the year, they should take advantage of increased viewership around tentpole events.**

Sports Space by Month



Data: Sports channel views 1/1/2017-12/31/2020

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SECTION 02

# REACHING SPORTS AUDIENCES THROUGH ADVERTISING ON YOUTUBE

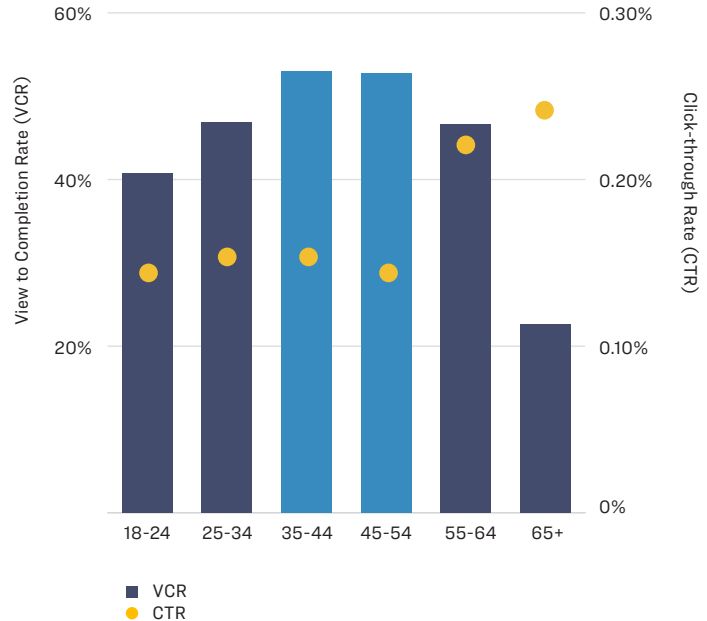
## SECTION 2: REACHING SPORTS AUDIENCES THROUGH ADVERTISING ON YOUTUBE

# 35-54 Year Old Viewers Are Most Likely To Watch Ads On Sports Placements

35-44 and 45-54 year-olds tended to view sports ads to completion more than other demographic segments, averaging around 52%.

The 55-64 and 65+ year-old segments clicked on sports ads the most, which may have partially been due to some accidental clicks, but we typically see the 55+ audience as more engaged with ads in general on YouTube across all content categories.

VCR and CTR by Age on Sports Placements



\*Pixability client performance on sports placements



## SECTION 2: REACHING SPORTS AUDIENCES THROUGH ADVERTISING ON YOUTUBE

# While Many Industries Find Success On Sports Placements, Retail And Energy Brands Lead In View Rate

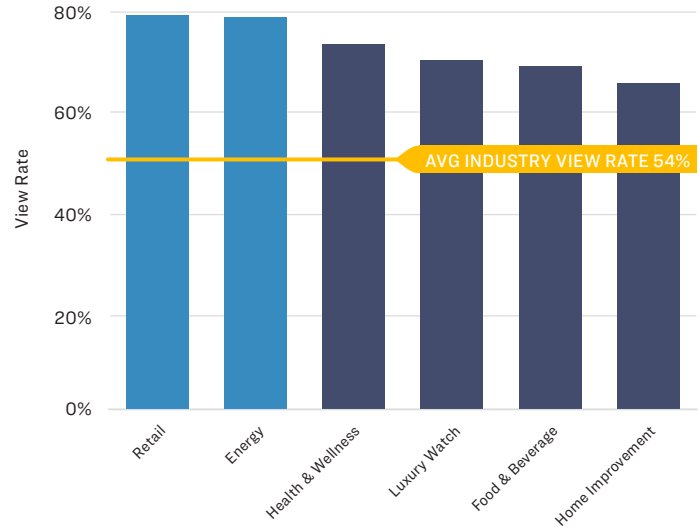
It wouldn't surprise many to learn that the top performing brand when advertising against sports content is a footwear accessories retailer. From relieving injuries to boosting running performance, the average sports viewer may have an interest in shoe comfort and foot health.

Health & wellness brands like pain relief balms, as well as food & beverage brands, also performed well when advertising on sports content on YouTube. Interestingly, sports brands ranked quite low in average view rates.



**Takeaway: More than just sports brands should advertise on sports content — in fact, many get higher view rates than sports brands.**

Top Performing Industries on Sports Placements



\*Based on data collected between January 2020 and October 2021 of Pixability client performance with at least 10K impressions on sports placements

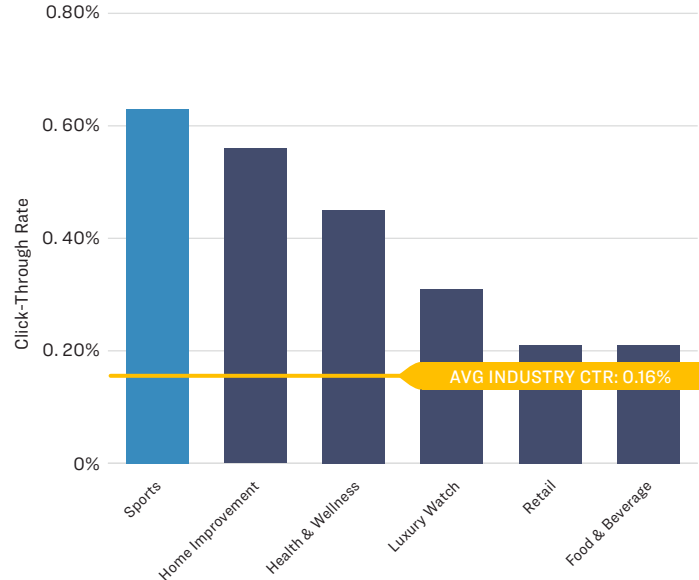


## Sports Brands Earned Highest Click-Through Rates On Sports Placements

While sports brands struggled to earn views on sports placements, these brands drove higher click-through rates on average than any other industry, clocking in at 0.63%. This indicates that sports viewers are interested in the product or message from sports brands, and looking to learn more or consider purchasing.

While this may seem obvious, other industries also performed exceedingly well against the average CTR of 0.16%, including home improvement, luxury, health & wellness, retail, and food & beverage. These industries were also in the top 6 for view rates, underscoring their effectiveness for advertisers when placing ads against sports content.

Top Industries in CTR on Sports Placements



\*Based on data collected between January 2020 and October 2021 of sports brand clients across IAB category placements with at least 10K impressions

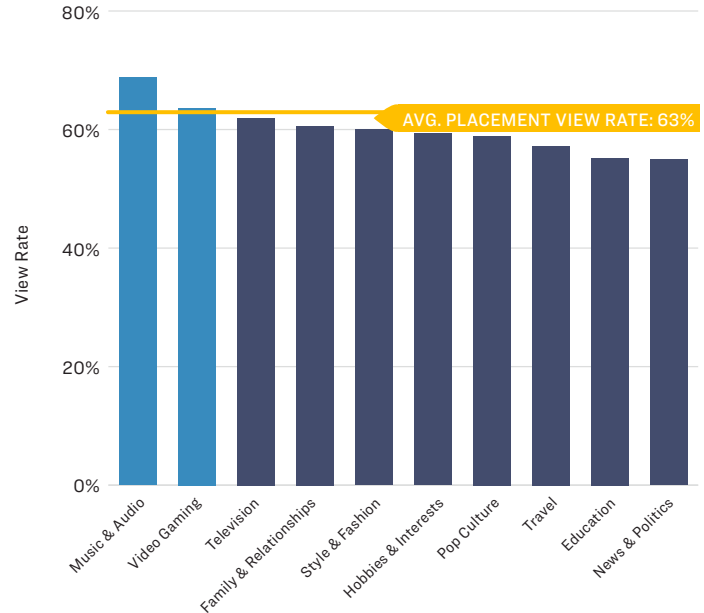
## SECTION 2: REACHING SPORTS AUDIENCES THROUGH ADVERTISING ON YOUTUBE

# Sports Brands Should Also Advertise On Music And Video Game Placements

Among sports brands that Pixability manages, ads placed on music and video game videos earned the highest view rate. Music is one of the most popular spaces on YouTube, so targeting this space is critical for sports brands. When looking at all sports videos on YouTube we noticed high views and engagements among music-related sports videos such as Super Bowl halftime shows or the national anthem.

Placements on video game content also saw high view rates, as there's a high degree of overlap between people interested in sports and people interested in games.

Top 10 Sports Brand Performance By Ad Placement Category



\*Based on data collected between January 2020 and October 2021 of sports brand clients across IAB category placements with at least 10K impressions

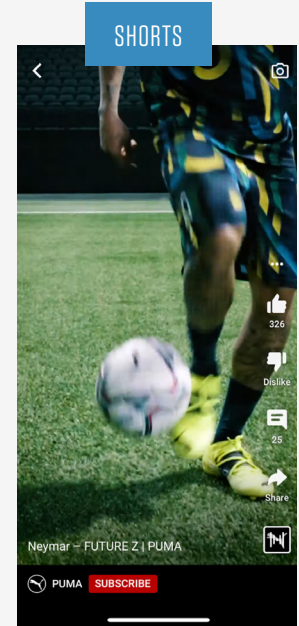


## SECTION 2: REACHING SPORTS AUDIENCES THROUGH ADVERTISING ON YOUTUBE

# Sports Brands Should Also Utilize The Latest Organic Features And Ad Products To Reach New Audiences

Brands like PUMA are taking advantage of new YouTube features like Stories and Shorts to have their content discovered by new viewers. Both Stories and Shorts are featured in sections on the homepage of the mobile app, so viewers can easily discover these snackable videos.

- Shorts are 60 seconds-or-less vertical videos and live on a channel like a normal video but can also be viewed in the Shorts tab on mobile.
- Stories are short vertical videos that stay live for 7 days and live only in the mobile viewing experience in the Stories section or when looking at a channel and tapping the channel icon.



CASE STUDY: SAUCONY & IPROSPECT

## Sports Advertisers Should Also Leverage CTV Advertising On YouTube And Other Platforms To Drive Full Funnel Results

When Saucony and its agency, iProspect, sought to launch three new running shoes with a goal of driving awareness and purchases among health, fitness, and fashion-focused consumers, they turned to Pixability to drive a unified Connected TV strategy. Pixability built a customized targeting strategy for each platform, and utilized audience insights to optimize across YouTube, Amazon, and Roku to maximize success.

65% 

of purchases attributed to the Amazon campaign were first time buyers of Saucony products on Amazon

882% 

lift in purchase consideration on YouTube on TV Screens, as measured by a Google Search Lift Study



KEY OUTCOME:  
CTV Awareness & Purchases

“With the continued shift in digital attention of our core audience to streaming video, we knew partnering with Pixability would maximize our reach and product interest.”

Jessica Rosenthal  
Senior Marketing Director,  
Saucony





## Takeaways

1. Brands that sponsor professional athletes can drive organic viewership by creating highlight videos of their best plays or fan-favorite moments.
2. Football and basketball content is hugely popular with consumers on YouTube. Targeting content related to these sports can help drive reach and engagement.
3. Always-on strategies can help brands connect with audiences that view throughout the year, while advertising aggressively around spikes in viewership during tentpole events can drive massive scale.
4. More than just sports brands should advertise against sports content, as various industries drive high reach and engagement.
5. Sports brands should take advantage of YouTube's latest organic features and ad products to reach and engage their audiences, such as Shorts to be discovered in-feed, and video action campaigns to drive consideration and purchases.

## Want to Learn More?

We'd love to share the full scope of our insights on the sports category on YouTube. Let's connect to find a time to share the full analysis: [Contact Us](#)



## About Pixability

Pixability is a technology and data company that empowers the world's largest brands and their agencies to maximize the value of video advertising on YouTube, Amazon Fire TV, Roku, and Hulu. We've run more YouTube campaigns than anybody, except for Google itself, and we're known as a leader in YouTube insights. Pixability is also one of seven companies worldwide that is certified by Google as a leader in brand suitability and contextual targeting and is the only one of these also certified in YouTube content insights.

## YouTube Measurement Program Certifications



## Awards



**Global Winner: Most Innovative  
Partner in Video Advertising**

**Inc.  
5000**  
2021 HONOREE



