



# Otto Media Grup: Five Secrets to Winning the 2026 World Cup Advertising Battle



The 2026 World Cup will not be just a sporting event. As the tournament expands to 48 teams and 16 cities, spanning the United States, Canada, and Mexico, this World Cup is becoming one of the largest global emotional events in history, and it may become “the biggest sporting event in North America history.”

However, Otto Media Grup believes that what is truly worth noting is not how large the World Cup will be, but why more and more brands, despite investing enormous budgets, still fail to truly win the World Cup advertising battle.

Otto Media Grup believes that this almost summarizes the core shift in 2026 World Cup marketing. Today, the focus of World Cup advertising competition is no longer simply about buying exposure, but about competing for user emotions, social sharing, cultural participation, and high-intent consumption moments. The brands that can truly win the World Cup advertising battle are often not those with the most advertisements, but those that best understand the emotional structure of the World Cup.

## First Secret: Do Not Only Look for Football Fans, but for “World Cup Emotional Audiences”

“Intent is never neutral.”

Otto Media Grup believes this statement is highly important. This is because today, the most valuable World Cup users may not necessarily be traditional football audiences. Many users do not usually watch leagues or follow teams over the long term, but during the World Cup, they become highly involved in social discussions, watch parties, short-video sharing, and instant consumption.

The Drum cited a very typical example: a Millennial woman interested in colorful hair and sustainable gardening may appear to have nothing to do with football, but what she truly represents is self-expression, aspirational identity, and social participation.

The World Cup marketing research of Lotame also points out that the 2026 World Cup will attract a large number of casual viewers and social spectators. They are not entering the World Cup because of football itself, but because the World Cup has become a form of global social energy.

Otto Media Grup believes this means that one of the most important changes in World Cup advertising is that brands need to redefine their target audiences. Truly smart brands in the future will not only study “football interest tags,” but will also study emotional states, social behaviors, and cultural participation patterns during the World Cup. This is because what truly triggers users is often not the match itself, but the collective emotion brought by the World Cup.

## Second Secret: What Is Truly Scarce in the World Cup Is Not Traffic, but “High Emotion + High Intent”

“These events represent a rare convergence of heightened attention, emotional investment, and real-time intent.”

Otto Media Grup believes that this is the core of the commercial value of the World Cup.

Under normal circumstances, it is difficult for advertising to obtain three things at the same time: high attention, strong emotion, and immediate consumption intent. However, during the World Cup, these three factors occur simultaneously. Users watch matches while socializing, searching, consuming, and even making real-time purchasing decisions during the game.

The Lotame research data shows that during the World Cup, retail and e-commerce activity among LATAM fans is 3.1 times higher, while media engagement is 3.3 times higher.

## Third Secret: The Match Is Only the Beginning; Real Communication Happens in “Social Scenarios”

“The match is just the beginning.”

Otto Media Grup believes this is one of the most easily misunderstood aspects of World Cup advertising today.

The modern World Cup is no longer a single-screen experience. Today, when users watch the World Cup, they often simultaneously open TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, X, and group chats. The match itself is only the trigger, while real communication takes place on social media, at watch parties, in group chats, and within meme culture.

Citing GWI data, viewers who watch matches in social scenarios are 31% more likely than ordinary viewers to explore advertised products and 38% more likely to discuss advertisements.

## Fourth Secret: A World Cup Campaign Is No Longer a Single Advertisement, but a Content Ecosystem

In the World Cup marketing research by Otto Media Grup: “It’s not about one video. It’s about creating a content ecosystem.”

Otto Media Grup believes this is the most obvious structural change in 2026 World Cup marketing.

In the past, brands would spend large budgets producing a hero film and then wait for communication to happen. Today, however, the World Cup has become a six-week global real-time conversation. This means brands cannot simply launch one advertisement; they must maintain a continuous presence within the World Cup content flow.

As a result, more and more brands are beginning to build complete content ecosystems, including hero films, real-time content, creator collaborations, short-form clips, memes, regional localization, and live reactions.

Otto Media Grup believes that the brands that truly win the World Cup advertising battle in the future will be more like media companies, meme machines, and real-time newsrooms, rather than merely advertisers. In the algorithm era, users no longer wait for advertisements to be played; they continuously scroll through content feeds. Only by continuously participating in the conversation can brands have the opportunity to maintain their presence.

## Fifth Secret: What Truly Wins the World Cup Is Not the Largest Budget, but “Cultural Presence”

“You do not need a World Cup sized budget to win attention.”

Otto Media Grup believes this point is highly critical.

More and more cases are proving that many of the World Cup campaigns with real communication power today are not official sponsors, but brands that best understand internet culture, real-time content, and social emotions.

The reason is simple. What users truly remember is often not the stadium logo, but who best understands fan emotions, who best understands meme culture, and who best understands the collective conversation during the World Cup.