

International Appeal: The rise of the NFL

Cologne, 28.01.15 – The Super Bowl is unquestionably one of sport's and marketing's greatest showcases. Historically the most-watched television event each year in the US, advertisers will pay a reported \$4.5 million USD for a 30-second commercial during the National Football League broadcast on the 1st of February 2015.

According to the NFL, Super Bowl XLIX will be available for viewing in 230 countries and territories and figures released by Repucom shows just how big that interest in America's most popular sport is growing throughout the world.

International growth of the league is something that has certainly been a pull factor for the NFL with games now becoming a part of the domestic sporting calendar in the UK. In 2011, 8.1% of the UK population were interested in the NFL, today that figure is 12.3%. That increase is the equivalent to there being an additional 1.86m NFL fans in the UK alone.

Growth of the NFL in China in the last year represents the biggest in terms of population size than anywhere in the world. Since 2013, interest in the NFL amongst the Chinese population has jumped from 1.7% to 7.9%, today. This jump of just over six percentage points is the equivalent of an extra 31 million people saying that they are now NFL fans.

Of the markets tested, in terms of the proportion of the population which say they are interested in the NFL, Russia tops the list of countries outside of North America. Today, 13.3%, or just over 10 million Russians (10.38m) are said to be fans of the NFL. This is a proportion which has grown by 5.3 percentage points in the last year alone. Since 2013, over 5 million more Russians say they are now fans of the league.

Mark Waller, Senior Vice President International, National Football League, said: "I am delighted that Repucom's research and insights are able to help us better understand our global fan base and the progress we are making in developing our sport."

Glenn Lovett, president global strategy at Repucom, said: "This growing trend should be a welcome sight for the NFL. More engaged fans bring additional revenue and growth opportunities across their business. They provide the league with a better offering to commercial partners in the US and overseas whilst increasing stability for the game."

"Ultimately, the next step in realising a stronger international presence will be taking this interest and emphasising the need for the growth of local participation in these markets.

"Educating these large new fan bases on the fundamentals of the game to establish grassroots efforts to grow participation is key. But so too is importance of establishing measure metrics around fan base growth and engagement to be able to clearly demonstrate that their efforts in reaching new audiences is working."

Such growth in international interest offers an insight into the vast opportunities for both brands and rights holders looking to tap into an emerging global yet well-established sport. Realising the potential the NFL holds as a global platform for sponsors could well open up the flood gates for a new brand of global sponsorship.

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Notes to Editor:

Quick facts: International NFL interest

Australia: American sports are making a revival in Australia. Most recently was the staging of the MLB's Opening Series in 2014, played at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The NFL could well follow suit as interest in the league is up. In 2013, 10% of Australians said they were interested in the NFL, today that figure is just under 11% (10.9%) representing an increase of over 140,000 more Australian NFL fans in the last year alone.

Brazil: Over the last year, interest in the NFL amongst Brazilians has risen from 1.2% (2013) to 3.6% today. This increase in just one year is the equivalent to there being over 3.3 million more NFL fans in Brazil.

France: Interest in the NFL in France has grown steadily over the last three years. In 2011, 5.5% of the population was interested in the league, today that figure is 8.3%. The difference represents a growth of just under three percentage points, equivalent to 1.24 million more people saying that they are either interested or very interested in the NFL.

Germany: German interest in the NFL has grown by over three percentage points in the last 3 years. Today, 9.4% of Germans say they're interested in the NFL which means that since 2011, there are 1.84 million more enthused NFL fans, with a total of 5.4 million now saying they are interested in the league.

India: India is one of the very few international markets which has seen a decrease in the proportion of people who are interested in the NFL. However, due to its size, the 1.9% of the Indian population who are fans of the NFL (down from 2.3% in 2011) still means the market is home to just under 5 million NFL fans (4.98m).

Indonesia: Over the last year, Indonesian interest in the NFL has risen from 2% (2013) to 5.8% today. This sharp increase is equivalent to over 3 million more NFL fans living across the archipelago.

Italy: In 2011, just under 3% of the Italian population were interested in the NFL. Today, that proportion is over 11%, representing an increase of 3.4 million more engaged fans. Italy now has the third largest proportion of its population saying they are NFL fans in Europe, behind only Russia (13.3%) and the UK (12.3%), and is ranked 4th most interested outside of North America.

Japan: With just under 12% (11.6%) of the population saying they are interested in the NFL, of the 18 markets highlighted, Japan now ranks as the 3rd most interested nation in NFL, outside of North America, by proportion of its population. Japan has become increasingly engaged with the sport. In 2011, 7.3% of the population was interested in the NFL. This represents a surge of over 3.5 million more NFL fans since 2011.

Netherlands: Today, 5.4% of the Dutch population are fans of the NFL, which accounts for just over half a million people (0.64m). It is a proportion which has grown by over 100,000 people since 2011, where public interest in the league was just above 4% (4.3%).

Singapore: Interest in the NFL is also on the rise in Singapore. In the last year alone, the proportion of people interested in the sport has risen from 8.9% to 10.2%. This is the equivalent of approximately 50,000 more NFL fans.

South Africa: 8.2% of South Africans are fans of the NFL. This is a figure which has grown from 5.3% in 2013, representing an increase of over half a million more people (0.58m) who say that they are interested in the league.

South Korea: Since 2011, there has been an increase of just under a million more South Koreans saying that they are interested in the NFL. The popularity of the NFL in the country has grown steadily over recent years, rising from 6.7% of the population saying they were interested in the league in 2011 to 9.8% today.

Spain: Interest in the NFL in Spain has risen from 3.9% of the population saying they were interested in the league in 2011 to 9.1% today. This rise of over 5 percentage points represents the NFL gaining just over 1.5 million new fans. With basketball already being a well followed sport in Spain, the figures suggest the market could well be ready for another popular US sport.

Turkey: Growth of the NFL in Turkey has exploded in recent years. Interest has risen from 0.5% of the general population in 2011 to over 8% today. This jump in interest is equivalent to there now being over 3 million NFL fans in Turkey alone.

UAE: Since 2011, the proportion of the UAE population who say they are interested in the NFL has risen marginally, up by 0.7 percentage points. Whilst this looks to be a small increase, this jump is the equivalent to there being 20,000 more NFL fans in the UAE today, than in 2011.

About Repucom

Repucom is a global leader in sports marketing research. Utilizing the leading technology and facilities for market research, media evaluation and commercial auditing, Repucom has created the industry's first global, full-service portfolio for sports marketing research and consultancy. The company provides a single, independent source of holistic market data and insights to help its clients achieve value in their marketing and sponsorship activities.

Repucom draws on almost 30 years of experience and accumulated insights. The company has become established as the research provider of choice for over 1,700 of the top rights holders, brands, agencies and broadcasters in sports and entertainment worldwide.

Your contact person

TOM SCOTT

Global Communications Manager

- » Tel.: +49 (0) 221 43073 177
- » Mob.: +49 (0) 162 1089 903
- » Email: tscott@repucom.net

REPUCOM

LUXEMBURGER STR. 299
50939 COLOGNE
GERMANY
REPUCOM.NET

