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How American Sports and Entertainment are Tapping into Brazil's Booming Fanbase

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With a population of 216 million and a distinct culture of fan fervor, Brazil is a unique region for cultural exchange and diplomacy. American sports teams and entertainers have shown a new dedication to the Brazilian fanbase in an attempt to capture the expansive audience and platform. This rise in interest tracks with Brazil's economic progress and an intensification of global appreciation of the country as a cultural power.

The National Football League

In the last year and a half, The National Football League (NFL) began its expansion into Brazilian markets, making further inroads into Latin America. The NFL International Series, an initiative that sends select teams to play abroad during regular season play, primarily focused only on the English fanbase, with London serving as the sole host for International Series home stadium games from 2007-2015. The following years saw an expansion with International Series games in Germany and Mexico. In 2024, São Paulo, Brazil, hosted the Series for the first time, opening the year's regular season with a game between the Green Bay Packers and the Philadelphia Eagles at the Neo Química Corinthians Arena.

The American teams made efforts to adapt to Brazilian sports culture. In acknowledgment of the inter-São Paulo soccer team rivalries between The Corinthians, Palmeiras, and São Paulo Football Club, the Eagles designed their International Series jerseys to reflect an identification with the colors of their host. This appeal to the sports culture of São Paulo (and specifically the Corinthians) fanbase garnered almost immediate results. The 2025 Super Bowl competition saw Brazilian fan engagement on both the social media accounts of The Chiefs and The Eagles, whereas historically, The Chiefs maintained a lead in fan engagement from Brazilians as a direct result of the widely covered Taylor Swift / Travis Kelce relationship. @coringaogigante, a Corinthians fan account with 468 thousand followers, posted: "It all started in São Paulo, at the Neo Química Arena – Congratulations, Eagles!" Since the September debut of NFL games in Brazil, the organization projects a growing fanbase of about 36 million, with millions of dollars projected from single event ticket revenue. (Griffin, 2024)

The Global Markets Program, a 2022 NFL initiative, awards teams within the league marketing rights to build international brand awareness and fandom outside of the United States "through fan engagement, events, and commercial opportunities." The Miami Dolphins first expanded to Brazil, with the New England Patriots close to follow in 2024. Florida and Massachusetts respectively have the largest Brazilian expatriate populations in the United States as well, aiding in the export of American Football culture to South America. As of 2024, Brazil has the largest NFL fanbase after the United States and Mexico, with further growth projected. (García, 2024)

Bruno Mars (& Company)

As with sports, there has been a growing interest on the part of musicians in the Brazilian market. In recent years, other artists have similarly catered to the Brazilian audience and fan base. We've seen the likes of Madonna and The Weeknd perform high-profile concerts in Brazil, as well as long-time Brazil enthusiast Paul McCartney, who has performed in the South American country 38 times so far. Bruno Mars poses a distinct example of U.S. artists catering to the Brazilian fanbase.

In September of 2023, Mars released a short song and promotional music video in preparation for his Bruno Mars: Live in Brazil tour: "Bruno Mars - Come to Brazil (Bruninho Theme Song)" a nod to the infamous "Come to Brazil" meme first posted in 2008 by a Twitter (X) user. "Come to Brazil" continued to gain traction in 2014 as fans and internet users in Brazil began posting the request more and more frequently in the comment sections of musical artists and celebrities. The phrase garnered recognition from NYMag, BuzzFeed, and other tuned-in online networks, as the internet began to catch on to the enthusiasm of the Brazilian fanbase.

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Later, after his 15 tour concerts, Mars released a TikTok video thanking Brazil for the tour's success. We see Mars getting a (presumably fake) tattoo of Christ the Redeemer on his chest, dancing in various Brazilian locales while sporting their national colors and flag, and rapping in Portuguese. Lyrics for the "Bonde do Mars" TikTok video include diminutives of Bruno Mars' name – Brunão, Bruninho – in the Brazilian linguistic fashion, as well as lyrical assertions such as "Bruno's arrived, now the party is in Brazil." In fact, in appealing to Brazilians via a short baile funk TikTok, Mars created a platform for reciprocal cultural exchange. Brazilians took the lyrics from Bonde do Mars and created mashups with their own twists on the lyrics and rhythm, further generating national enthusiasm for Mars.

The Evolving U.S.-Brazil Relationship

Latin America and Brazil have long been an arena for the political, economic, and ideological interests of the United States government. The 20th Century saw several eras of public diplomacy and policy programming spanning decades targeted at Western Hemisphere countries and Brazil specifically, including President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Alliance for Progress under President Kennedy, as well as other forms of cultural outreach. (Cull, 2008)

The 21st Century witnessed an expansion of American interest in Brazil. As noted by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in Brazil, the relationship between the two

countries is crucial to the promotion of peace and economic prosperity in the Western Hemisphere. The largest democracies of their respective continents, they have continued to work cooperatively towards accomplishing shared goals. Under the Obama Administration, the 2015 U.S. - Brazil Defense Cooperation Agreement encouraged joint cooperative exercises and the exchange of technology. In 2019, Brazil became a Major-Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) of the United States, formalizing a strategic working relationship and commitment to increased cooperation. (U.S. Dept. of State, 2025)

In a cultural parallel, the beginning of the 21st century, as noted, is witnessing increased cultural exchange between Brazil and the United States. American sports teams, musical artists, and entertainers recognize, independent of government officials and administrative programming, the importance of the Brazilian fanbase, which operates parallel to the nation's growing economic and trade power. In coming years, we are likely to see a further expansion of interest in the fanbase as other artists and companies take note of fan enthusiasm. The penetration of American artists and sports teams into the Brazilian market serves as a reminder that cultural exchange can be one of the most effective forms of diplomacy and communication between nations.
