

AC Milan NBA Europe Fan Survey Brief

The objective of this report is to assess whether awarding an NBA Europe franchise to Milan in partnership with AC Milan would reduce cold-start risk and accelerate adoption/monetization by converting football fans (including non-basketball fans) into sustained NBA Europe followers.

Executive Summary

- **An AC Milan partnership reduces NBA Europe’s cold-start risk and accelerates time-to-scale.**
- YouGov (leading market research firm) evidence shows AC Milan delivers a sports-native base, a large non-basketball conversion pool, and a +15pp lift in durable “follow” intent versus a neutral Milan team—while still capturing meaningful Year-1 engagement across the broader market (including ~42% of Inter fans).
- Qloo (consumer analytics firm) modeling indicates AC Milan supporters are culturally aligned with the NBA fan lifestyle (venues, hospitality, nightlife, retail, digital), reinforcing latent demand and long-term adoption potential.

YouGov Survey

Methodology

YouGov (leading market research firm) ran a survey with the following parameters:

- Dates Run: Feb 4–11, 2026
- Respondents: 1,625 adults
- Segments:
 - AC Milan fans (n=402)
 - Inter fans (n=406)
 - Other Serie A fans (n=410)
 - Non-Serie A fans (n=407)

We evaluate demand across three progressively strong levels of fan intensity:

- Interested – Attitudinal Openness (Top-Of-Funnel Demand)
 - Measures stated willingness to care about the team or basketball.
 - Reflects latent demand and concept resonance, but does not imply behavioral commitment.
- Engage – Year 1 Behavioral Activation
 - Measures likelihood to take at least one concrete action in Year 1 (e.g., watching games, viewing highlights, attending matches, or purchasing merchandise).
 - This signals real usage and near-term monetization pathways.
- Follow – Durable, Identity-Level Adoption
 - Measures likelihood to actively follow the team over time.
 - This reflects deeper commitment and identity attachment, and is the strongest indicator of sustained fan value.

1. Milan is not a cold start due to AC Milan's audience

Takeaway: AC Milan delivers an **immediate, sports-native fanbase** with **deep identity attachment** (45% strongly identify as supporters) and **proven monetizable behaviors** (44% have attended live; 19% purchased merchandise), plus meaningful **basketball conversion headroom** (52% are interested in basketball), materially **reducing launch risk**.

- AC Milan supporter density (identity):
 - 55%: "Supporter, but not hardcore"
 - 45%: "AC Milan is my club; I strongly identify as a supporter"
- Behavioral proof (habit + spend) among AC Milan fans:
 - 44% have attended an AC Milan match in person (San Siro or away)
 - 40% say AC Milan is part of their identity / something they grew up with
 - 37% watch most AC Milan matches live on TV/streaming
 - 34% follow AC Milan news/transfers/rumors closely
 - 34% follow AC Milan on social/digital channels
 - 19% have purchased AC Milan merchandise in the last 12 months
- 52% of AC Milan fans currently are interested in basketball

2. AC Milan branding creates incremental basketball fans

Takeaway: An AC Milan branded team **drives measurable incremental basketball interest** (64% for ACM fans; 32-41% for other Serie A fans), powered by **brand trust and cultural relevance, accelerating adoption**.

- Net increase in interest in basketball if an AC Milan-affiliated NBA Europe team launches:

| Segment | % Interest Increases |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| AC Milan fans | 64% |
| Other Serie A fans | 41% |
| Inter fans | 32% |
| Non-fans | 19% |

- Drivers of increased interest amongst ACM Fans:
 - 39% "Because I trust and follow AC Milan"
 - 33% "Because it gives me a reason to care about basketball"
 - 23% "Because it feels culturally relevant to Milan"
- Drivers of increased interest amongst Inter Fans, Other Serie-A Fans, and Non-Fans:
 - 43% "Because it feels culturally relevant to Milan"
 - 36% "Because it gives me a reason to care about basketball"

3) Brand adjacency de-risks Year-1 monetization

Takeaway: The partnership produces a **wide year-1 engagement base** (72% of AC Milan fans; 42% of Inter fans) anchored by **scalable free consumption** and unusually strong **paid viewing** (26% of AC Milan fans) and **attendance intent** (24% of AC Milan fans).

As mentioned in the Methodology, “Engage” is different than “Follow”. Engage is defined as any of watching games digitally, watching highlights, attending a match, or purchasing merchandise.

- Engagement funnel: “Would engage in at least one way with an ACM branded NBA Europe Team” (Year 1)

| Segment | % Would Engage |
|--------------------|----------------|
| AC Milan fans | 72% |
| Other Serie A fans | 53% |
| Inter fans | 42% |
| Non-fans | 27% |

- AC Milan fan engagement modes (multi-select)
 - 39% watch via free TV/streaming
 - 29% follow via highlights/social
 - 26% pay for subscription to watch regularly
 - 24% attend in person
 - 12% buy merchandise

4) Affiliation creates measurable incremental adoption vs neutral Milan

Takeaway: AC Milan affiliation delivers a **clear lift in durable follow intent among AC Milan fans** (+15pt lift) creating a **clear launch advantage in the anchor base**, while **broader market engagement remains meaningful** (42% of Inter fans; 53% of other Serie A fans).

- “Overall likely to follow” (a more intensive level of fandom than ‘interest’ or a single point of engagement):

| Segment | ACM-Affiliated Team | Unaffiliated Milan Team | Lift from ACM Affiliation |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| AC Milan fans | 48% | 33% | +15 pts |
| Other Serie A fans | 30% | 39% | – 9 pts |
| Inter fans | 20% | 36% | –16 pts |
| Non-fans | 11% | 14% | – 3 pts |

- Even with lower “follow” intent under AC Milan affiliation, Inter fans still show meaningful Year-1 engagement:
 - 42% of Inter fans would engage in at least one way
 - 20% would follow the team
 - Most common Inter engagement modes: 23% free viewing, 13% attend, 13% paid viewing, 13% highlights/social
- 53% of other Serie A fans would also engage with the team in at least one way.

Qloo Analysis

Methodology

- Qloo uses large-scale behavioral signals (where people go, what they buy, and what they engage with) to build cultural “taste profiles” for audiences.
- We used Qloo to assess latent demand by testing whether AC Milan fans’ broader lifestyle behaviors are structurally similar to U.S. NBA fans.

Key Finding: AC Milan Fans are structurally closer to US NBA fans than Inter fans

Takeaway: AC Milan’s fanbase exhibits a **strong behavioral similarity to core U.S. NBA fans** (69% similarity, vs. 56% for Inter and 20% for other residents), indicating **stronger latent demand** and **lower long-term adoption risk**.

- Qloo Fan Similarity:

| Milan Cohort | Similarity to U.S. NBA Fans |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| AC Milan fans | 69% |
| Inter fans | 56% |
| Other residents | 20% |

- This indicates AC Milan fans are a more NBA-aligned audience in **broader lifestyle behavior**, not merely in stated sports interest.
- Qloo’s diagnostic decomposition suggests the ACM advantage is driven by stronger alignment in domains that commonly define NBA fandom, including:
 - Live event / venue behavior (arena, stadium)
 - Hospitality + sports bars (restaurants, bars)
 - Nightlife + music/event culture
 - Fitness + sporting retail
 - Digital/social engagement

Appendix

Appendix 1 - What is the breakdown between existing basketball fans and non-basketball fans?

The cohort of ACM fans surveyed were split nearly equally between interested and not interested in basketball (52% and 48%, respectively).

| Metric: | Currently Interested in Basketball (52%) | Not Currently Interested in Basketball (48%) |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Would engage (any Year-1 mode) | 92% | 50% |

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Interest in basketball increases | 83% | 43% |
| Likely to follow – ACM branded | 69% | 24% |
| Likely to follow – Neutral team | 55% | 8% |

Appendix 2 - What is the impact of being a Milan Resident vs. Living Elsewhere in Italy on interest?

While the overall trends remain consistent from the report above, Milan residents are more excited about the team than residents outside of Milan. However, non-Milan residents still show fandom potential.

| Metric | Milan Residents | Other Italian Residents |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Would engage (any Year-1 mode) | 74% | 67% |
| Interest in basketball increases | 69% | 55% |
| Likely to follow – ACM branded | 53% | 37% |
| Likely to follow – Neutral team | 37% | 23% |