

SUCCESS CASE

FUTV takes on the Pirates of the Caribbean with Sportian

Costa Rican online platform fights against illegal content distribution through Content Protection services

How subscription services strengthened Costa Rican football

FUTV is a Costa Rican subscription TV channel specialising in football, which owns the exclusive rights to the Costa Rican First Division Football League (Liga FDP): the 40th strongest league in the world according to IFFHS and the second in Concacaf, behind only the Mexican First Division (Liga MX). At a national level, Costa Rican citizens tend to follow local football more than any other international competition, in contrast to their neighbours, who prefer the English, Spanish or other Latin American leagues.

Despite this, local rights had not commanded very high fees, a fact that affected club revenues. These concerns, together with an increasingly digital and vocal fan base, convinced FUTV to develop a cable TV channel to distribute matches on a pay-per-view model with different subscription options.

For fans, this flexibility adds value to the content which, consequently, can attract new revenue streams that enhance the competition, help establish new partnerships with sponsors and even professionalise the sport with academies and programmes for young players.

Operators, football clubs and fans alike quickly understood the added value of a service that offered more ways to watch football, with access to content before, during and after the match. So much so that in less than two years FUTV was available on 100% of cable TV operators nationwide. Its rapid growth also allowed the service to open up Costa Rican football at an international level in countries such as Mexico, the United States and Panama.



“Our biggest differential value is the type of content we offer thanks to the partnerships we have with the biggest clubs in Costa Rica and the exclusive rights we acquired during the last two years. We aim to promote Costa Rican football and make it the most professional league in Central America”

ALEXIS SANDOVAL
MARKETING &
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

The Challenge

Minimising the impact of audiovisual piracy at a business, industry and partner level

Since the launch of the platform, FUTV was aware that online piracy was going to be a problem, given that other distributors were also impacted. However, incorporating plans to prevent this risk at the outset of the project was not a priority.

FUTV only fully understood the level of innovation being carried out by pirates and the damage their activity could cause when it began working with the main Costa Rican football clubs and television operators. After quantifying the economic impact of a drop in content views for the client, the partners and the league itself, the platform decided to take action.

In doing so, the client focused its efforts on protecting its partners and its platform from the negative effects of piracy, which include decreased revenues and impaired consumer perception of the brand.

In terms of the type of content that was being viewed illegally, the most popular was post-match summaries and

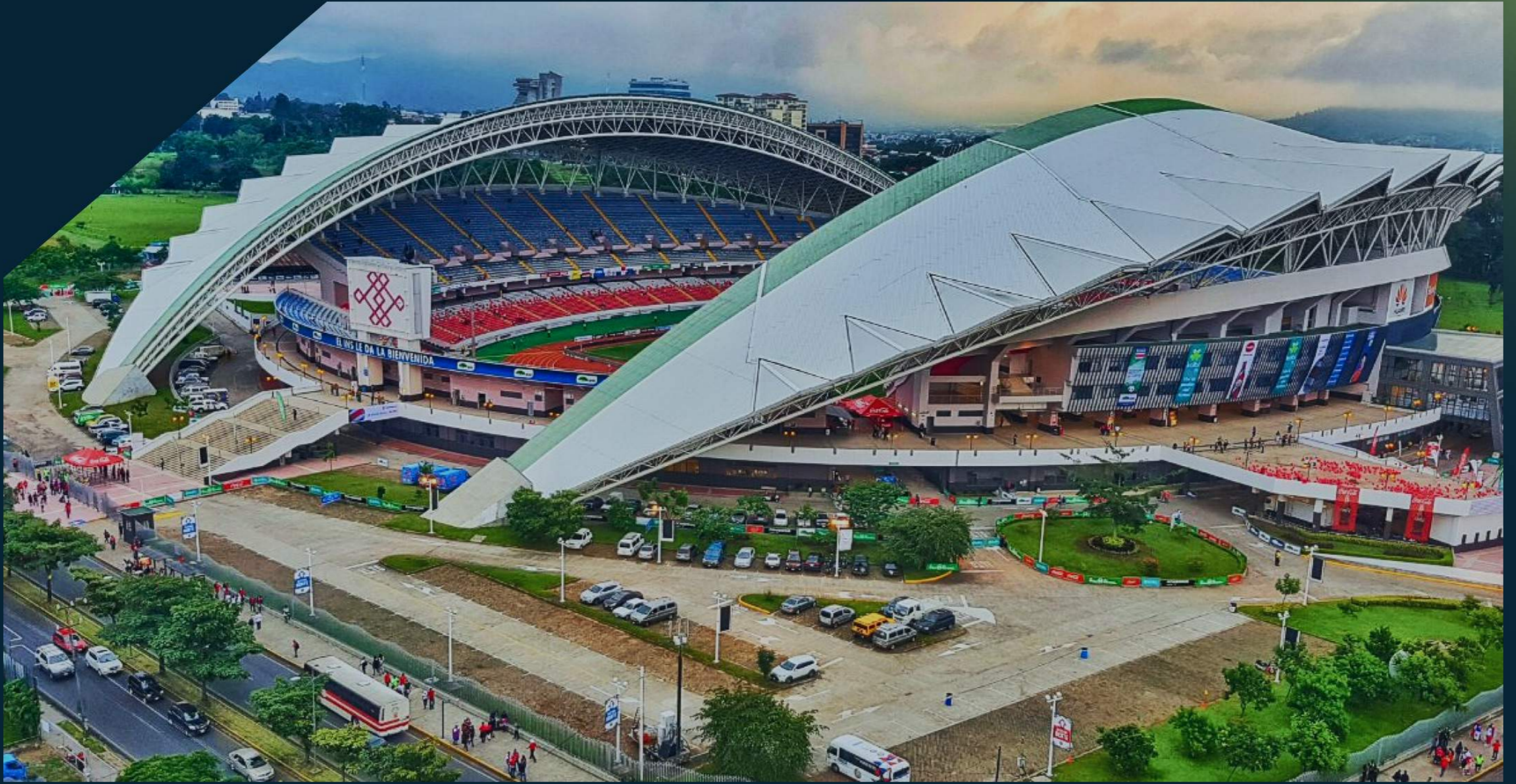
highlights, ahead of live streams. As for the platforms where these activities generally occur, networks like TikTok or Facebook are currently the most popular.

The FUTV team thought directly of Sportian and its Content Protection services as the ideal provider due to its extensive experience in the fight against piracy in the sports industry, and its background in offering advanced technological solutions to world's leading sports properties. For this reason, Alexis Sandoval states that "collaborating with a renowned company in fighting piracy shows how serious we are about the matter and that we won't settle for anything other than the best".

The client understood that Sportian's deep understanding of emerging technologies will help the provider upgrade the FUTV solutions with the most disruptive capabilities, helping it in its quest to stay one step ahead of illegal online activities.

"If initially Facebook was the platform where most illegal content was hosted, today the focus is on TikTok"

ALEXIS SANDOVAL



Implementing a real-time monitoring solution

Given its strong digital character, FUTV always understood the importance of choosing a solution based on advanced technologies that were constantly evolving. Therefore, Sportian based its project on **Vento/Marauder, an exclusive solution that monitors social media platforms in real time and protects content against piracy.**

Vento/Marauder's function is to identify content that is being broadcasted and viewed illegally and raise a flag with the hosting platforms so that they can shut down those pirate streaming sites immediately.

The Vento/Marauder adaptation and implementation project started on 28 July 2021 and took less than 2 months to complete. Once implemented, the solution started tracking both social media and videos distributed by various online sources, which added to the deindexation of URLs broadcasting live content and fake profiles posing as FUTV.

In addition to weekly monitoring meetings, the Sportian team produces **regular reports on pirate behaviour with relevant insights** to facilitate efficient and agile decision-making for FUTV.

To keep abreast of new trends and incidents, FUTV is in constant communication with Sportian's team of specialists. While the previous provider provided reports via WhatsApp, with Sportian FUTV started to receive a series of extensive reports with detailed information on both consumer behaviour and market trends, which also helped the client to adapt its future product launches. Sportian's presence in Mexico through its specialised hub facilitated fluid communication and a more agile way of working adapted to the client's needs.

The implementation phase was completed in under one month, and consisted of the following steps:

- 01** **Gathering Information and Documentation:** The Sportian team set up calls with Tomateros to understand the club's goals, its portfolio of products, and its customers. The team also established relevant keywords for each customer profile, parameters such as price, volume of views and sales, etc. Part of this collection phase was also spent gathering the intellectual property documentation so that the team could file reports on behalf of the company.
- 02** **Adapting the algorithm:** the team used these parameters to launch its monitoring through Fuoco. Its machine learning capabilities quickly refined the search terms and allowed the club to set up different whitelists containing sites where its products could be sold legally.
- 03** **Customising dashboards:** although customisation is an ongoing process, the team began adapting the Fuoco dashboard to the needs of the club from the beginning of the process. This dashboard is constantly updated allowing Tomateros to access valuable information at any time, download reports or learn about trends related to certain products that are being counterfeited more than usual.
- 04** **Fine-tuning and reporting illegal activities:** in accordance with how product offerings, customer priorities and online selling strategies change, the Sportian team is constantly fine-tuning Fuoco. As soon as the implementation was complete, Fuoco began detecting illegal products, which are automatically sent to a team member who reviews each case and reports said the product to the relevant marketplace that is hosting it.
- 05** **Ongoing support:** The Sportian team organises weekly calls to update the client on different topics such as which new types of products are being sold illegally, as well as report on which environments have the most illegal sellers and which products are pirated the most. The club uses these insights to take measures such as modifying the design of certain products.

The Sportian team leads monitoring from its two global hubs, in Madrid and Mexico, ensuring that the client has 24/7 support. The versatile team created for Tomateros includes different profiles such as journalists, social network specialists, developers and engineers. The project started in Madrid but is currently run by a team of 15 people in Mexico.

Results

With this implementation, FUTV achieved a qualitative leap in several areas:

MORE THAN
7,000

Have been removed from social networks, with a removal rate of 99.59%

162

URLs have been removed from Google with a deindexation rate of 99.39%

A TOTAL OF
115

Have been protected during the project

Several apps that illegally streamed live Costa Rican League content have been removed from the official app stores and from unofficial websites that redirected to the stores.

Why Sportian

Sportian is an international company specialising in technology tools for the sports industry and its Content Protection services offer the most advanced solutions to combat piracy. The client chose Sportian because of its extensive capacity to combat piracy problems in the sports sector, which FUTV was struggling with.

The client believed in the reliability of the Sportian brand, appreciated the human aspect of the team, the fluid communication and their ability to adapt to unforeseen situations. With Sportian, customers gain the capacity to innovate and adapt their solutions with state-of-the-art technologies.

As a FUTV provider, Sportian not only understood the client's needs and provided a solution that delivered results quickly, but also went above and beyond. Since the results achieved have been so positive, the Costa Rican Chamber of Infocommunication (Infocom) showed interest in a collaboration with Sportian to find ways to improve the industry at an institutional level and implement an anti-piracy solution at a country level.



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