

# UNDERSTANDING SPORT SPECTATORS – WHAT ARE THEIR MOTIVES AND PREFERENCES FOR WATCHING SPORTS ON MOBILE DEVICES?

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## Abstract

### Introduction

Sports broadcasts evoke major rating figures and create value for both media companies and sports organisations. Media companies can reach large audiences and obtain revenue from both subscription fees and advertising. For sports organisations, sports broadcasts provide financial funding with which to strengthen their competitive position. One relatively new media channel that can be employed for sports broadcasts is mobile TV. Research on this topic is still in its infancy and the few analyses that have been done show different results (e.g., Kunz et al., 2010; Schafmeister & Ellert, 2010).

The main research question of the study at hand is: what motivates people to watch sports on mobile devices such as smartphones? A second question that was addressed was how viewers with different motives would respond to different types of mobile TV content. Understanding user motives and matching this information with content preferences provides great insight for both academics and practitioners.

### Literature review

Previous mobile TV studies include research on the user (typical user profile, motivations, needs) the mobile device itself (performance, features and limitations, cost), content (type, interactivity), as well as context (where, when, how long is mobile TV consumed) (e.g., Buchinger et al. 2009). Two recent studies with a special focus on user motives for

watching sports on mobile devices, which were carried out in the same country, have come up with different results (e.g., Kunz et al., 2010; Schafmeister & Ellert, 2010).

### Methodology

Existing studies implicitly assume that user interest is the suitable separator to identify divergent motive structures. However, mobile TV can only be viewed if consumers have a technically adequately equipped device – e.g., a smartphone – at hand. Smartphones are the technical market entry barrier. Hence, in this study, smartphone ownership is used as the separator between groups to identify divergent motive structures. This idea is based on the finding that the big difference between traditional TV and mobile TV is the device (Buchinger et al., 2009) and smartphones open the door to (future) mobile TV consumption. The aim of this paper is to understand user motives and preferences for different types of mobile TV content.

The questionnaire used in this study is based on existing literature on motives (e.g., Wann et al., 2001; Trail&James, 2001) and previous studies on mobile TV. It contains 26 motive statements and questions on consumption patterns, unmet needs, mobile TV content, and demographics. Results are based on a representative sample of German subjects (n = 661) drawn from an online panel in January 2011.

### Results/Discussion

The representative sample showed that 78% of the population in Germany has heard about mobile TV. Thirty one percent own a smartphone (group 1) with the option of mobile TV. Of this 31% a relatively large part of 89% has a general interest in sports. In comparison, of the group without a smartphone (group 2), 77% is generally interested in sports, which is significantly less. In terms of motives, group 1 also differs significantly from group 2. Group 1 shows stronger motives to watch sports than group 2. Additional factor analyses show that the number of motive factors is four for both groups (KMO 0.894/0.933; explained variance 65%/63% [group 1/group 2]). However, factor loadings show that the motive items are associated with different factors across the groups. In other words, strong differences exist in the structure of motives between the groups. These differences indicate group 1 has a stronger interest in sports in general.

Concerning the question of content preference for mobile TV, differences are quite clear. Smartphone owners (group 1) prefer a general access to traditional TV broadcasting stations on their smartphone over a sports specific service. Thirty five percent consider a package including all traditional TV broadcasting stations interesting whilst only 26% would say the same for a sports specific package. For those interested in a sports specific package, two motives were found that distinguish them from others within group 1: one is a preference for live broadcasts and the other is emotional attachment.

The results of the study describe user motives for watching sports broadcasts. This information is used to evaluate different types of mobile TV content. Results of the study at hand provide recommendations as to which motives are to be addressed for a successful sale of sports in the new media channel of mobile TV.

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