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Sport Events and TV Audiences: The Particular Case of a Regional TV Channel

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Aim of the paper and research questions

TV channels in the whole world are aware of the great impact that sport events have on their own audiences. Keeping this in mind, this study focuses on the particular case of a Spanish regional TV channel. Specially, we try to measure the impact that competing TV channels' programs have on its audience. In particular, we are interested in analyzing whether the regional TV audience of a particular sport event increases (or decreases) depending on the characteristics of the other TV programs that are broadcasted at the same time.

Literature review

In the sport economic literature there are few papers dealing with the determinants of TV sports audience. Kuypers (1996) handles a model where the dependent variable is the proportion of Sky Sports subscribers watching a football match (rating). Kanazawa and Funk (2001) estimate whether the race of the players has a significant effect on TV audience. Furthermore, Carney and Fenn (2004) estimated some equations in order to predict the number of TV viewers of a particular football match. Finally, Buraimo (2008) analyses TV audience in the case of the English Premier League. This paper tries to shed more light on this issue by utilizing a new approach to study the TV sport audience of a regional channel.

Research design and data analysis

In the empirical exercise we use a unique data set including TV ratings from the considered regional channel (TPA) throughout the sample period - from January 2007 to December 2009 - as well as a set of dummy variables indicating the kind of programs broadcast on competing TV channels (TVE1, La2, Antena3, Cuatro, TeleCinco, La Sexta). Although we are mainly interested

in measuring the impact of a particular kind of (competing) television program on the regional TV sports audience, we also pay attention to the effect of the previous (next) program audience. This allows us to capture a possible “habit persistence” effect in the (regional) TV consumption of sports events. The econometric model we use takes into account the particular features of these variables.

Results

We foresee to find a higher regional TV audience when a sport event is broadcasted, especially when this is a Spanish First Division football match, or even more, when the local football team is on TV. Also cycling and other sports like canoeing or rally races are expected to have a strong impact on the TV audience despite the kind of programs scheduled on rival TV channels.

Discussion and conclusion

Sport events contribute to increase the audience of a TV channel. In this paper we focus on a Spanish regional TV channel (TPA) to test this empirical evidence. In particular we found that broadcasting popular sport events, as football matches from the UEFA Champions League, appears as a strong determinant of increasing (regional) TV audience. Thus, we can conclude that TV sports relate to higher level of audience regardless of competing programs in time-sharing. Our findings have implications for TV policy. They are expected to be helpful for TV channel CEOs in optimal scheduling.

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