

A Transformative Typology Of The Visual Consumption Of Mediated Sport

Stavros, Constantino¹; Smith, Aaron C. T.¹; López-González, Hibai^{2, 3}

¹RMIT University, Australia; ²Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom; ³University of Deusto, Spain

E-mail: con.stavros@rmit.edu.au

Aim of the research

We contemplate the digital and technology-driven transformation of sport viewing to provide important insights in the development of content and its impact on consumptive practices. This is a critical examination given the contemporary collision of digital platforms and analogue mind-sets. We posit that mediasport content has been developed in four distinctive, yet interrelated, dimensions, namely the sensory enlargement, cognitive enhancement, digital connectedness and transformative engagement of the viewing experience.

Theoretical background

This presentation is built on two platforms. First, it pinpoints the increasingly complex intersection between stakeholders in the sports industry, where institutions have a growing convergence, and can now only be thought of as a bigger connected network of interests (Boyle, 2010) that are tied to a mass consumptive experience that goes beyond the simple transmission of an event. Second, it also resonates some of the characteristics of the reconfigured act of contemporary sport viewing where events draw on the confluence of many advantageous ingredients such as live transmission, major personalities, a big-business nature, massive simultaneous audiences, technology-enriched and media-centred environments. These ingredients propel innovation and a widely-accepted paradigm that digital technologies have prompted a transformation in the way fans consume mediated sport (Galily & Tamir, 2014). Similarly, fans complement their primary viewing platform, television, through newer media and second screens that enhance that engagement (Gantz & Lewis, 2014). These changes in the forms of viewing are not exclusive to sport; although, as Hutchins (2011) has noted, the sport and media connection has become one of the most accelerated versions of the impact of digital culture on any kind of mediated content.

Methodology

Sport's juxtaposition with digital culture makes it a highly suitable basis for considering transformative consumptive practices. This study is conceptual and draws upon a rich examination of purposefully selected literature, blending work in media and marketing with industry actors and contemporary developments to formulate a typology that can be used to both evaluate the progression of mediated sport consumption, and chart a path forward, particularly in relation to how consumers will engage with sport and executives will manage this process.

Results, discussion and implications

Our conceptualization and examination of the literature presents four consumptive dimensions in a typology featuring a sensory to cognition continuum juxtaposed with a passive to active pathway; before providing some concluding remarks as to how sport will be impacted by the conflation of these elements in the drive for an enriching experience for all concerned. We argue that while the visualization of sport content has witnessed a material enlargement driven by the evolution of the mediation, this has been accompanied by a cognitive enhancement to make sense of that visual content. The digital progress, in turn, has facilitated the shared, multi-platform vision of sport that ultimately has multiplied the monetization opportunities for fans sufficiently engaged in the viewing.

The integration in everyday life of the viewing enhancing technologies and the big data turmoil around them has prompted some researchers to question the real value of these new developments and to wonder if fans are being held hostage to a 'digital sublime' (Hutchins, 2016). This will be explored in the presentation as the data surrounding sport continues to grow, potentially turning games of skill and endeavour into algorithmic actions that potentially suck the passion out of the very emotional aspects that make sport so endearing to so many. In a rush to seek engagement and monetization it will also be fascinating to consider which sports consumers will stay attached to. Will the dominance of competitions such as the EPL parlay their brand power into further global success, or will regionally-based leagues exploit their more niche offerings into a community driven interaction that builds on social engagement rather than one driven purely by commercialism?

In essence, we conclude that the sensory enlargement, cognitive enhancement, digital connectedness and transformative engagement technologies that have historically allowed sport to be viewed, understood and

enjoyed across the globe are now also adding innovations that are making it shareable, discussible, bettable and playable in every increasing ways. The long-anticipated transformation of sport into a common language of mediatised entertainment is mutating to something a little bit different, but no less binding. The original argument to support that claim of universalism, namely the importance of visual components in mediated sport as opposed to more word-driven artefacts in films and music, has now incorporated (and arguably is being subsumed) by more globally recognizable streams of data and its various figurative and patterned forms.

References

- Boyle, R. (2010). Sport and the Media in the UK: The Long Revolution? *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 13, 1300–1313. doi: 10.1080/17430437.2010.510668
- Galily, Y., & Tamir, I. (2014). A Match Made in Heaven?! Sport, Television, and New Media in the Beginning of the Third Millennium. *Television & New Media*, 15, 699–702. doi: 10.1177/1527476414541553
- Gantz, W., & Lewis, N. (2014). Sports on Traditional and Newer Digital Media: Is There Really a Fight for Fans? *Television & New Media*, 15, 760–768. doi: 10.1177/1527476414529463
- Hutchins, B. (2011). The acceleration of media sport culture. *Information, Communication & Society*, 14, 237–257. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2010.508534
- Hutchins, B. (2016). Tales of the Digital Sublime: Tracing the Relationship Between Big Data and Professional Sport. Convergence: *The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 22, 494–509. doi: 10.1177/1354856515587163