The Accessibility and Affordability of Televised Sport and Effects on Viewership

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The Accessibility and Affordability of Televised Sport and Effects on Viewership

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Honors Project

Submitted to the Honors College
at Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for graduation with university honors

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Abstract

This research examined how accessibility and affordability impact viewership for consumers of live sports content. More specifically, this study analyzed the viewing preferences of sport management majors at a Midwestern mid-major university. Accessibility and affordability of sports programming has previously been studied, particularly relating to cable and satellite television. However, this study also examined this developing relationship in the emerging age of sports on live streaming services. The following research question guided this study: How do accessibility and affordability of televised sports impact viewership for viewers? Three sub-questions were asked to create a better understanding of the primary research question. These questions included: 1. What methods do sport management majors use to access televised sport; 2. How much money do sport management majors spend for television-related viewing costs; and 3. What are viewers’ main motivations for selecting their methods of viewership? Eighty-nine individuals completed a survey, and results were analyzed used qualitative methods. The results revealed that increased accessibility and affordability lead to higher levels of live sport viewership. Participants primarily used cable or satellite to access live sports content, while many did not pay for their primary viewing methods. Over-the-air and cable or satellite users used these platforms to access live regional sports, while individuals used over-the-top for broader content access. This study is limited to college sport management majors and provides a baseline for research on this topic. Future studies using other demographic groups will provide a more holistic picture of how individuals consume live sports content.
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Introduction

As a child, I grew up in a family surrounded by sports. Even before I can remember, I was exposed to sports through live broadcasts of events on my family’s cable package. My father often recalls early memories of watching the original Xtreme Football League (XFL) with me from February to April 2001. I was less than six months old and already exposed to the sports that my father was watching week after week. I may not remember watching the 2001 version of the XFL, Michael Jordan playing for the Washington Wizards at the tail end of his career, or Tom Brady winning his first three Super Bowls in 2002, 2004, and 2005, but that early exposure to these events and many more instilled a lasting love for sports that continues in my life to this day.

As a young sports fan, I experienced the evolution of technology and its impact on the broadcasting of live sports. My first memories of watching sports came when I was four years old, watching Tim Duncan’s San Antonio Spurs on a box TV with my dad. I was fascinated by the future Hall of Famer, who eventually led his team to the championship that season in 2004-05, and I eventually became familiar with other Hall of Fame members of the team: Manu Ginobili, Tony Parker, and head coach Gregg Popovich. I grew up largely supporting the Cleveland Cavaliers and Utah Jazz due to my family’s ties to Ohio and my experience growing up in northern Utah, but the Spurs, on their way to securing their third title, are a team forever ingrained in my memory as the first team I remember watching as a toddler.

My early exposure to sports came through my family’s basic cable package, where I accessed regional and nationally televised NBA, NFL, and MLB games. I also spent my elementary school years watching tennis, golf, NASCAR, NCAA sports, and major global events like the Olympics and FIFA World Cup. I felt like the world was at my fingertips with most of
my favorite teams and leagues accessible to me, and I spent my preteen years developing a fascination with many teams and players. My favorites included all three major Cleveland sports teams, then-Cavalier LeBron James, the hometown Utah Jazz, Tom Brady’s New England Patriots, the 2008 NBA champion Boston Celtics led by Kevin Garnett, Ray Allen, and Paul Pierce, New York Yankees captain Derek Jeter, tennis stars Roger Federer and Serena Williams, golfer and fellow southpaw Phil Mickelson, and many more.

In 2013-14, my early teenage years, I discovered new forms of media to integrate into my sport fandom. I began analyzing stats using the Cleveland Cavaliers app on my iPod Touch to try to determine if the Kyrie Irving-led team could sneak into the playoffs that year. Living in Utah without access to Cleveland’s regionals sports networks, I rarely watched the 33-49 Cavaliers on my television. They rarely appeared on national broadcasts, but I used the internet to keep up with the team in other ways. I also began connecting with my grandfather, who was a sportswriter for a local newspaper, over sports, sending him YouTube videos I made analyzing various NFL and MLB games and teams. He worked as a sports journalist for 79 years, spending 60 years at the Record-Courier in Portage County, Ohio, until his death in 2015 at the age of 96. My grandpa’s decorated career and his status as the oldest-working journalist in Ohio influenced my exploration of sports as a potential career path, and he watched me begin to pursue amateur sports writing and analysis in the last couple years of his life.

In high school, apps and websites such as ESPN.com, Watch ESPN, and the CBS Sports app helped me access sports in new ways. Since my family had a cable subscription, all I had to do was sign into these apps with my TV provider, and I had access to my favorite sports on the go. In 2015, basic Comcast cable packages cost approximately $70 per month, while customers received a discount if they also purchased an internet package, which cost $67 per month on its
own (‘Comcast now has,’’ 2015). I have distinct memories of watching the NCAA men’s basketball tournament during my free time in high school, splitting my laptop screen four ways to consume as many games as I could. The 2016 tournament ignited a deep love for college basketball that extended through high school as I watched players like Duke’s Grayson Allen and Brandon Ingram, Oklahoma’s Buddy Hield, and Villanova’s Josh Hart play for the first time. I was a die-hard Duke fan for the remainder of high school, watching almost every game on ESPN, ACC Network, or CBS.

As I neared graduation, the usage of internet to consume sports further expanded to include streaming platforms. Netflix exploded in popularity as I entered middle school in 2012, but it wasn’t until 2017, my junior year of high school, when Amazon Prime acquired non-exclusive rights to stream Thursday Night Football games (Hutchins et al., 2019), allowing live sports to enter the streaming realm for the first time. As sports transitioned to streaming services, the cost of cable rose rapidly. This is the time when many individuals began moving on from their cable subscriptions. It seemed that these cord-cutters had three options: adopting the streaming services, returning to over-the-air options like antennas with no monthly subscription, or giving up access to live programming altogether.

In February of 2019, my family’s combined cable and internet package rose to $165 per month. This was an increase of $37 per month from the bill we received in January, or a nearly 29% price hike in one month. My parents tried to negotiate with Comcast/Xfinity to receive the same rate offered to new customers, but the cable company did not budge. Just before the 2019 NCAA men’s basketball tournament, my parents decided we could no longer afford cable and abruptly cancelled our subscription after 21 years. I was devastated to discover that I could no longer watch college or NBA basketball, which were at the height of their respective seasons, as
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well as the upcoming MLB season. My parents briefly cancelled their cable subscriptions a couple years before, and we accessed NFL games through an over-the-air antenna attached to our wall. However, since we lived in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, the image was grainy, fizzling in and out as we struggled to receive a signal in our home. My parents repurchased cable on a new customer plan, and we returned to watching sports with clear images and a strong signal for the next few years. After we cut cable for the second time in 2019, we purchased a new antenna with a better signal, and we now have access to CBS, Fox, NBC, and ABC for most of our sporting needs.

In 2019, after graduating high school, I moved across the country from Utah to Ohio to attend Bowling Green State University. I volunteered in Utah State University Athletics’ media relations department as a high school senior, which inspired me to pursue a sport management degree with a minor in journalism. I arrived on campus in the fall of 2019 and regained access to cable through the built-in access offered in my residence hall. My new cable package offered more than the basic cable that I grew up with, including networks for the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, and conferences like the SEC and Big Ten. During my first two years of college, I watched more sports than ever, viewing two to four games per day in the dorm common areas with my friends. I regained access to my favorite leagues, developed an interest in the 2020 XFL and NHL, and reignited my interest in NASCAR.

After my sophomore year, I moved to an apartment complex, where I was led to believe that each unit came with free cable. However, when I arrived in the fall of 2021, I quickly discovered that the complex had cut residents’ access to cable, and I found myself with no access to sports. Shocked and upset by this turn of events, I purchased an indoor antenna for $60 so I could access basic channels such as CBS, Fox, NBC, and ABC without a monthly fee, and I
went on to watch the nationally televised NFL games throughout the fall. At the same time, NBA and MLB games, which are largely broadcast on cable networks, became nearly impossible to watch. As a result, I experienced a rapid decline in knowledge and following of teams and players for both leagues.

The inconsistency of sports coverage I was able to access at home and in college became frustrating for me as a sports fan. At home, I only had access to NFL football regularly, with other sports like basketball and baseball occasionally appearing on a free channel accessible through my antenna. Meanwhile, at school, almost any sport I desired to watch was available at my fingertips. In my off-campus apartment, I was back to square one with just an antenna to watch sports until my family purchased a streaming package with basic Hulu, Disney+, and ESPN+ in late 2021. This package granted me access to many college and international sports leagues, as well as the NHL and, eventually, the third installment of the XFL. All of these changes in my sport access made it difficult to consistently watch one sport for a whole season as I jumped from place to place, and I began to wonder how other sport management majors navigated accessing and affording the content they consume. College students often transition from living with their family, who pays for most of their access to entertainment, to attending school and possibly working on the side with little disposable income. As a result, many college students have different viewing habits than they did growing up. Additionally, they may struggle with a combination of accessing and affording live sports programming in their homes.

As a sport management major, I need frequent access to live sports to assist with my schoolwork and professional development. Because of my varied sport viewing experiences in college, I wanted to know how other sport management majors felt about these same issues. While analyzing causes affecting live sport viewership for sport management students, I
narrowed it down to two main topics: accessibility and affordability. The purpose of this study is to examine accessibility and affordability to analyze effects on viewership for college students.

**Literature Review**

Today’s college-aged students have grown up in a time of rapid technological advancement. Students born at the turn of the 21st century experienced an early childhood without smartphones, instead using cable television and desktop computers for entertainment. In 2023, students often use a mix of smart television, streaming services, smart phones, and laptop computers to stay connected with the world. To understand this rapidly developing world of connectivity and how televised sports fit into the picture, we need to start with the early foundations of sport and mass communication.

**Before Television: Newspapers and Radio**

Spectators have viewed sports for thousands of years, dating back to at least ancient Greece, but modern professional sport is a much newer invention which came about in the late-19th century (Whannel, 2009). During the early years of modern professional sports, fans had to attend an event in-person to gain the experience of watching a game. Print coverage of sport emerged in the 1830s with the release of weekly publications and sporting sheets aimed primarily toward the wealthy classes. Among these was William Trotter Porter’s *Spirit of the Times* weekly, which was first published in 1831. The publication received as many as 40,000 subscribers by 1856 as “the nation’s premier sporting sheet” (Rader, 2009, p. 22). Specialized sporting sheets were also popular in the mid-1800s. They could be found in publications such as Henry Kyle Fox’s *National Police Gazette*, first published in 1845, *The New York Clipper* (1853), and the *Sporting News* (1886). The *National Police Gazette*, focusing on multiple forms of entertainment, eventually became the best-selling weekly in the United States, while the *New
York Clipper and the Sporting News contributed to baseball’s growing popularity in America (Rader, 2009).

Sports coverage made its way into newspapers near the end of the 19th century, allowing individuals to access the previous day’s sports scores and stories along with their other news. The first newspaper sports department was started in 1883 at the New York World, while the first newspaper sports section emerged in 1895 at the New York Journal (Whannel, 2009). It was only at this time when people began to receive consistent access to sports scores and stories, even if they were not available until the next day.

Just after the turn of the 20th century, the radio emerged as a staple in the home, changing the way that individuals accessed sports. In these early years, radio was largely used for two-way communication. When the United States entered World War I, the radio waves were occupied by the U.S. military, resulting in a large decline in usage among civilians. However, it was not long after the war’s end that radio programming began to cover sporting events. Live sports first hit the airwaves on April 11, 1921, when KDKA in Pittsburgh, Penn., the first licensed radio station, broadcast a boxing match between Johnny Ray and Johnny Dundee (“First live sporting,” 2021). Not even three months later, on July 2, 1921, the second boxing match was broadcast, this time on a national level. The world title fight, which took place at Boyle’s Thirty Acres in Jersey City, N.J, was between world heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey and world light-heavyweight champion Georges Carpentier. Over 300,000 people listened over the radio, and the fight generated great publicity (Kisseloff, 1995). The fight also had an international appeal, with Dempsey living in the United States and Carpentier hailing from France. On August 5, 1921, KDKA broadcast the first Major League Baseball game over commercial radio waves, with the
Pittsburgh Pirates defeating the Philadelphia Phillies by a score of 8-5 ("Baseball on radio," n.d.).

As the 1920s continued, radio began to seep further into the homes of people all over the world. In 1924, 10% of households in the United Kingdom had a radio, while one-third of American households had one in 1929. By 1938, 71% of UK households had a radio in their homes, showing how commonplace it became in less than 20 years (Whannel, 2009). As a result of this access to radio, individuals could now listen to a live play-by-play call of a baseball game from their couch rather than attending a game in-person. This marks the first time in history where sports entered people’s homes in real time, sometimes reaching a national audience. This access simply required the purchase of a radio to use the free airwaves and listen to the game at no cost. Additionally, in the 1930s, another form of technology known as the television was in its infancy. This invention went a step further than radio: allowing individuals to see live sports with their own eyes without ever leaving their homes, although it took time for the definition of images to improve.

**Early Television Expansion**

Television was hard to access for the average consumer in the 1930s due to its newness and high expense. The television allowed images to be flashed on a screen within the home for the first time, bringing the idea of the cinema into the household. Television first became available in Britain in 1936 but was mostly restricted to the London area. As a result, audiences rarely reached over 20,000 people in the early years, revealing that lack of easy access to television had a profound impact on viewers (Whannel, 2009).

Meanwhile, in the United States, television was off to a similarly slow start, with modern sets first hitting the shelves in 1939. These first sets were priced between $199.50 and $625,
which is equal to between $4,332 and $13,572 in 2023. Only 400 sets were sold, and there was still little interest when the top price was lowered to $395 (still over $8,500 in the 2023 equivalent). However, this lack of interest was not due to indifference toward the television itself. A 1939 Gallup poll indicated that 4 million Americans would buy a television set if it was made available to them (Kisseloff, 1995). The large interest in television despite the extremely high cost indicates that “availability” to these individuals was likely contingent on affordability. The high cost made the television unaffordable for the average American, and, as a result, only about 400 of the 4 million people interested in television sets were able to get one.

It was within this context that sports entered the realm of television. In 1936, the Berlin Olympics were televised live in German cinemas as one of the earliest examples of live sports broadcasting (Whannel, 2009), and in 1939, the first live sporting event, a college baseball game between Princeton and Columbia, was broadcast on public television in the United States. The game occurred on May 17, 1939, and was broadcast by NBC from a camera on a 12-foot platform on the third base side of the field. The game reached the 400 television sets in America capable of receiving its signal, and the milestone was covered in The New York Times the next day. (Koppett, 1999). Ironically, another section in that same newspaper highlighted how dealers were looking to sell radios rather than TVs at the time due to public indifference to the television. However, that changed relatively quickly after World War II, largely due to sports’ advertising potential.

Following World War II, baseball was a main attraction for Americans to purchase a television set, which in turn helped television networks attract advertising (Koppett, 1999). Before network era television, individual stations had to purchase programming that would result in people purchasing TV sets. As a result, stations targeted crowds at bars using sports, which
were cheap to air and took up a large chunk of scheduling. At the same time, sponsors began paying for sports television rights, resulting in teams accommodating the necessary equipment to televise their events (Kisseloff, 1995). Sports television became a public commodity in America as fans flocked to bars to watch the latest baseball game or boxing match. Meanwhile, smaller leagues which did not receive advertising, or the resulting television coverage, struggled to attract fans to their games, leading many of them to fade away or fold entirely.

In Britain, television production was put on hold entirely during World War II (1939-1945) as mass production was used for the war effort, but success for television both in the UK and the United States took off in the years following the war as sets became more affordable. In the United States, 250,000 television sets were sold in 1946. The 1948 London Olympics became the first Olympics to be broadcast live on television in the UK (Whannel, 2009). In 1950, between five and seven million television sets were in circulation worldwide, with Great Britain, the United States, and the USSR all having established television systems (Kisseloff, 1995; Whannel, 2009). Television interest had surpassed the estimated interest of four million people indicated in the 1939 Gallup poll, giving people a way to watch live sports from home.

The Network Era (TV I)

During the 1950s, a new era of television began which became known as the network era. This era, sometimes known as TV I, is defined by the dominance of three main networks in the United States: ABC, CBS, and NBC (Martin & Reeves, 2001). These networks received over 90% of television’s primetime audience at TV I’s peak, meaning that nearly all Americans experienced similar television experiences as they watched similar programming. TV I took on a Fordist mode of production, which emerged following World War II as assembly line production
and mass consumption fueled a post-war boom. Network television promoted ideas such as the nuclear family, consumption, suburbanization, and Cold War paranoia.

With the emphasis on mass culture becoming prevalent during the post-war era, television took a similar route, looking to attract mass audiences to its networks. Most people had a shared experience watching the same shows and events due to the lack of competition, and this mass consumption carried over into sports. In the United States, boxing remained popular in the 1950s while football and baseball began to emerge as TV-friendly sports with the invention of better zoom technology (Whannel, 2009). TV I reached its peak in the 1960s, and it was under this backdrop that the Super Bowl emerged as a television-oriented event in 1967 (Martin & Reeves, 2001). The event remains a relic of the Fordist era, focusing on a mass audience and nationalistic ideals, but it has also evolved to include attributes of the post-network era of TV II, which emerged in the 1970s.

Sports television experienced its most rapid growth during the network era, particularly between the years of 1954 and 1970. It was during this time that sport-specific shows became established, creating the formula for sports television production and formats which still exist in 2023. BBC’s Sportsview emerged in 1954 as one of the earliest sports shows in the UK, and Grandstand followed in 1958. ABC’s Wide World of Sports, one of the most influential sports programs of all time, emerged in 1961, while BBC’s Match of the Day, which focuses on Premier League soccer highlights, first aired in 1964. British network ITV ran a program called World of Sport to compete with BBC’s Grandstand starting in 1965. In 1970, ABC broadcast its first Monday Night Football game, which remains a staple of the regular season NFL schedule over 50 years later (Whannel, 2009).
With this foundation for sports shows, highlights, and live games established, sports programming became integrated into the lives of consumers, both in the United States and abroad. Telestar, the first commercial satellite, launched in 1962, bridging the gap between the United States and Europe for the first time. As Garry Whannel (2009) described, “Immediacy is now technically universal – given the financial will, any event can be flashed around the world (p. 209). Color television, action replay, and slow-motion technology were also gradually introduced during the 1960s, drastically enhancing the sport television experience and making sports an important advertisement element in the sale of television sets. Sports on TV transitioned from grainy, black-and-white pictures to higher resolution productions presented in color, although it was still a far cry from how fans consume their sports in 2023. With the technology and networks in place to create a good quality product, consumers now had the opportunity to watch sporting events from home for free while sometimes enjoying a better experience in the comfort of their own homes than they would attending a game in-person.

Post-Fordist TV (TV II)

In the 1970s, the network era of television was slowly replaced by what became known as post-Fordist TV, or TV II. This era was defined by a TV I broadcast distribution system which also incorporated cable, satellite, VCR, and PC technologies (Martin & Reeves, 2001). One major change from the network era to the post-Fordist model was the cost involved. Network era channels were free-to-air, meaning that consumers could access the airwaves for free without paying monthly to receive access to the channels. That changed in the TV II era with the introduction of cable and satellite, which required consumers to purchase packages of channels for a monthly price. This created an affordability issue for some fans, who may not have been able to afford the cost of a monthly subscription to access their favorite teams. As a result, some
events became inaccessible for individuals who continued to use only the free airwaves provided by the network era channels.

Sponsorship became an integral part of television during the 1970s, creating increased brand awareness as advertisements received consistent hits on TV. This exposure led brands to focus on receiving increased television coverage worldwide, ushering in an era of global fanbases and embracing professionalism when amateurism was ‘all but dead’ by the mid-1980s (Whannel, 2009). As companies paid more money to sports’ governing bodies to have their ads shown on TV, leagues began to cater to these advertisers and the television audience by changing rules and formatting to create a made-for-TV product. The shift created a gap between heavily sponsored, ‘elite’ spectator sports and everything else. During this time, leagues like the NFL, NBA, and Premier League achieved symbiosis with television, gaining massive popularity. Meanwhile, other sports like track & field, which embraced amateurism until 1981, became more obscure (Whannel, 2009). Whannel (2009) points out that there were more televised sports than ever before, but the range of different sports available to consume became much more limited as a result of this advertising shift. This remains true in 2023 as leagues with larger advertising deals receive more television time, therefore drawing in a bigger audience.

The TV II era marked a time of rapid deregulation, which was spearheaded through legislation such as the Cable Communications Policy Act. This legislation, passed by the United States Congress in 1984, effectively eliminated regulation of cable rates at the state and local levels (McCarthy, 2009). This law spurred a rise in cable rates, causing Congress to pass further legislation to attempt to mitigate the issue. Cable deregulation occurred during a second wave of technological innovation, which took place during the 1980s and 1990s. DVDs, videos, computers, video recording, and digital time-shift technologies emerged during this time,
creating a new ability to stray from the strictures of the TV schedule (Whannel, 2009). Rather than watching sports live at specific times of the day, individuals could now record them and watch them later. This was consistent with the post-Fordist model of the time, which transitioned from the mass culture emphasis from the network era to a focus on ‘cult culture,’ which segmented the audience into smaller, niche audiences (Martin & Reeves, 2001).

TV II also formed a multichannel environment where cable, satellite, and digital technologies created an increased ability for interactivity. Whannel (2009) explained, “The audience is fragmented but has a far greater range of means of responding to and interacting with the screen” (p. 209). In the TV I era, sports fans had very few choices for the games they could watch, and they were limited to accessing these games in specific viewing slots. In the TV II era, fans could now select which sports they accessed through the purchasing of cable and satellite packages, as well as research information on their teams using the internet. Niche viewing became commonplace, as indicated by the transition away from the network era channels as commonly viewed primetime programming for everyone. Primetime viewership for the national broadcast channels, which reached over 90 percent during the height of the network era, pulled less than 60 percent of the primetime audience by 2001, even with the addition of Fox as a fourth major national broadcast network (Martin & Reeves, 2001). This indicates that consumers were no longer viewing programming as part of a mass audience, instead selecting the programming that suited their interests in a decentralized way. The TV II era marked a major shift in how individuals accessed their television programming while an increased emphasis on cost factored into their decision-making.
The Streaming Age (TV III)

In the mid-2000s, streaming services began to emerge as new methods of accessing televised content. Streaming TV refers to accessing live or on-demand video content through the internet rather than through cable, satellite, or over-the-air television waves. Live streaming was first attempted on June 24, 1993, by a garage band called Severe Tire Damage, and the stream took up about half of the internet’s available bandwidth (Meisfjord, 2018). In 1995, a baseball came was live streamed for the first time as the New York Yankees faced the Seattle Mariners (“The history of live,” 2021). YouTube became the first platform to take off in the on-demand video streaming realm in 2005, allowing consumers to watch pre-filed content through a large, online video library. Netflix set the model for on-demand TV streaming when it introduced a monthly subscription model in 2007 (Frost, 2022). Since then, other platforms such as Amazon Prime, Hulu, Disney+, ESPN+, and YouTube TV have joined the market. These services offer everything from on-demand movies and TV shows to live sports, entertainment, and news. In the 2010s and 2020s, the increase in internet access worldwide, the improvement of streaming technology, and the rising costs of table television all contributed to the rise of streaming as the primary method of watching TV.

Over the last six years, live sports have made their way into the streaming realm, with some services making deals for individual sports and others for a wide variety of leagues. In 2017, Amazon Prime Video purchased non-exclusive rights to stream the NFL’s Thursday Night Football on their platform (Hutchins et al., 2019), and in 2018, Disney launched ESPN+ as an OTT platform to exclusively stream sport-related content (Weprin, 2021). Since then, CBS and NBC got in on sport streaming through the creation of their new streaming services, Paramount+ and Peacock. Those services carried some of America’s biggest events, with Paramount+
covering the NCAA’s March Madness men’s basketball tournament and Peacock providing exclusive coverage of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Most recently, Amazon Prime Video gained exclusive streaming rights for Thursday Night Football in an 11-year deal which began during the 2022 season (Sutelan, 2022). Amazon made this deal with the assumption that Americans would invest in their streaming service to access some of the NFL’s weekly coverage. This move also indicates that the country may be reaching the height of the streaming era, within and outside of sports.

Like post-Fordist TV, streaming services require monthly subscriptions to gain access to specific programming, and they also place an emphasis on decentralized and segmented media as individuals select the platforms which best suit their needs. These platforms have a reputation for costing much less than cable packages, which is a major draw for cable TV users to “cut the cord” and transition to streaming TV. However, some individuals are finding that having multiple streaming services can add up to the price that they were once paying for cable. Sports fans can easily select the streaming services which best fit their needs, creating their own packages to watch their favorite leagues and sports carried by different services. Some fans may only need one or two services while others may purchase several. Additionally, the ability to watch live and, in some cases, through replay, creates an interactive experience which was not as readily available in the network or post-Fordist eras of television.

Types of Television Defined

From the first televised sporting event in 1939 (Goodman, 2014) to the present day, viewers have used various methods of television consumption to access their favorite teams. The three distinct television eras previously outlined reveal three methods for consuming sports: over-the-air television, subscription-based traditional systems such as cable and satellite, and...
over-the-top (OTT) television as a web-based streaming selection. In what follows, I explain more of what each era includes.

Over-the-air television is the primary viewing method used in the network era (TV I). It involves accessing free, public television waves using a device such as an antenna. Users only need to buy the equipment necessary to access the waves as a one-time purchase. During the TV I era, antennas came with the television sets people purchased. In 2023, indoor antennas typically cost between $10 and $40, while attic and outdoor antennas often range from $60 to $150 ("4 things to know," 2022). Since the waves are public, there is no monthly subscription required to access the networks available through this viewing method. In 2023, antennas are still commonly used to access these channels, and some can also be accessed through Smart TV technology, which uses an internet connection to bring free channels to your television.

Cable and satellite fall into the category of subscription-based viewing methods of watching TV which do not require an internet connection. These technologies gained popularity during the post-Fordist era (TV II) and require a monthly subscription to access the channels. Cable is accessed through a cable plugged directly into a TV, while satellite signals reach your television through a dish installed outside. They do not use the internet to provide consumers with their television channels. The cost of cable has skyrocketed in the 21st century, with monthly subscription costs rising 74 percent between 2000 and 2018, counting for inflation (Mills, 2018). The average cost of a TV-only cable subscription in 2023 is $83.35 per month (Harward, 2023).

Over-the-top television is the newest method of accessing televised content, which can be referred to as TV III for this study’s purposes. OTT involves using an internet connection to access live and on-demand programming. As a result, it can easily be accessed through Smart
TVs, which allow users to use an internet connection to access OTT platforms like Netflix, Hulu, ESPN+, and YouTube TV, in addition to any cable, satellite or over-the-air platforms they have. Viewers can also use OTT on devices like laptops, smartphones, and tablets. Like cable and satellite, OTT requires a monthly subscription to access televised content. These subscription costs can vary greatly, depending on the service. Platforms like Apple TV+, Amazon Prime Video, and Hulu can cost as little as $7 to $15 per month while cable-replacement platforms like DirecTV Stream, Hulu + Live TV, and YouTube TV can range from $70 to over $150 per month (Willcox, 2023).

The Rise of Cord Cutting

As OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu expand in popularity, they are looking to draw fans away from TV II television options. As of 2021, OTT had more subscribers in the United States than cable (Tengeh & Udoakpan, 2021), and web-based streaming’s popularity in other countries such as South Africa and Taiwan was rising as broadband access increased worldwide (Chen, 2019). Looking to remain competitive, pay-TV providers began paying more for broadcast rights, especially for sport, in the mid-2010s when sport was not yet available on many streaming services (James, 2016). This caused these providers to increase subscription rates to make up for increasing costs and, in turn, caused more frustration for subscribers who did not want to pay more for their television service. As a result, many customers began switching from cable and satellite television to OTT platforms as sports became available on streaming platforms beginning in 2017.

With TV I and TV II losing the exclusivity of sport broadcasting, OTT entered the conversation as a competitor looking to draw subscribers to its platforms. With streaming becoming more popular in America than cable and satellite in recent years (Tengeh & Udoakpan,
2021), the focus now lies on the accessibility and affordability of different types of viewing platforms and how they impact sport viewership habits.

**The Demographics and Habits of Over-the Top Television Users**

The usage of over-the-top television and its impact on television consumers in its early years has been studied broadly by several researchers in the past decade. In 2019, Alec Tefertiller and Kim Sheehan studied the motivations, behaviors, and satisfactions behind post-network television use. In a sample size of 807 people, they found that 61 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 use online streaming as their primary platform for consuming television content. This statistic indicates that three in five adults below the age of 30 prefer streaming over traditional television mediums, showing the rapid transition away from cable and broadcast formats to various streaming services to watch content. Tefertiller and Sheehan (2019) also suggest that television affinity is higher for viewers of traditional televised content, meaning that traditional media viewers find the medium important to them and experience a higher attachment to their preferred method of media consumption than streaming viewers do. While young viewers may be more likely to use streaming as their primary method of viewership, the affinity toward traditional media suggests that viewers who primarily use cable or satellite may continue to hold on to these older services despite switching to streaming platforms.

In another study of how consumers changed their viewing patterns with OTT in South Africa, Robertson Khan Tengeh and Nokuphiwa Udoakpan (2021) found that binge watching, login sharing, and downloading and viewing later were all patterns that showed up in OTT viewers. More specifically, they mentioned that this downloading and streaming was used more frequently with sports and movies. With United States TV-watchers more likely to subscribe to OTT services rather than traditional TV methods (Tengeh & Udoakpan, 2021), this streaming
phenomenon from South Africa could also apply to American sport viewers, who may want to record a live event and watch it at a later time. This interactive feature provides a bonus for OTT subscribers that viewers with more traditional setups may not have.

Tefertiller (2020) also found that interactivity played a major role in platform selection for television consumers. In 2018, 2.8 million pay-TV (cable and satellite) subscribers cancelled their subscriptions, with a significant predictor of this cord cutting being the lack of interactivity from their pay-TV platforms. Sport viewers tend to be interactive when viewing a game by checking scores and standings, watching multiple games at once, and toggling between games with ease. As a result, the lack of interactivity in traditional pay-TV experiences could be a possible predictor of sport fans transitioning to OTT television subscriptions. Another prominent reason for cutting the cord was cost savings from doing so, as cable and satellite costs are rising. Meanwhile, so are the costs of streaming as more OTT platforms enter the market and subscription costs gradually increase.

**Impacts of Cost on Access to Live Sport Programming**

The rising cost of sport television has been mentioned in multiple publications since OTT started increasing in popularity in the early- to mid-2010s. In a 2016 article for *The Los Angeles Times*, Meg James explained that sport was the main culprit for rising cable costs while, paradoxically, being cable’s lifeline. At this time, sport had not entered the streaming realm, so most sport access for die-hard fans came from pay-TV subscriptions. Meanwhile, over the years, costs increased for viewers as bidding wars upped the prices for each channel while the number of regional sports channels doubled from 1990 to 2015. This means that sport fans were paying significantly more to watch the same teams because they were paying for more channels to continue their same viewing habits. Despite the higher prices, pay-TV companies were able to
retain subscribers in America since they were the only platforms that provided readily available access to live sports.

This phenomenon was similar in England for fans’ abilities to access Premier League soccer. David Dubas-Fisher (2019) wrote an article for *The Nottingham Evening Post* discussing how the cost to watch every Premier League match in the 2019-20 season had risen by £390.12 ($500.72) over a five-season span. To watch all 200 games over the course of the season would cost £1,032 ($1,324) in subscription fees between traditional cable packages and streaming services. While these fees dramatically expanded viewers’ access to games (53% of Premier League matches in 2019-20 compared to just 13% in 1992-93), the overall cost to surpass the paywall and watch all these games created the potential for some fans to lose access to the Premier League altogether due to the inability to pay for the subscriptions. Gary Neville, a Sky Sports pundit, emphasized the importance of affordability to fans in 2019, saying:

> There are lots of positives about football. The stadiums are better, the quality of play is fantastic, and the atmosphere is far more inclusive, but for me affordability is something that needs to be addressed. Football has to stand above other leisure businesses. It is more than just a game. It is about community and we need to ensure we are doing all we can not to price fans out of the game. (Dubas-Fisher, 2019, para. 15-17)

Neville’s perspective as a media member reflects an opinion held by many sports fans: they want costs to be low enough that they can afford to watch their favorite teams from home. This is a perspective that led me to study the topic of accessibility and affordability for live sport viewers because rising costs continue to remain a prominent issue among multiple platforms.

The examples from the U.S. and U.K. show the effects of rising costs of live sport broadcasts in both traditional television and streaming services. Hutchins et al. (2019) cover the
issue of accessibility, similar to the Premier League example, in their study on the growth of media sport portals in Asia, the UK, Europe, the Americas, and Australasia. Their research supports the concept that sport portals, defined as individual OTT platforms like Amazon Prime Video and DAZN, provide access to more games and increased personalization while also indicating that the cost of sport viewing is rising. Yi-Ning Katherine Chen (2019), who researched competition between OTT and traditional TV platforms in Taiwan, discovered that the financial benefit of OTT over television scored the lowest of all the factors in her study. The multiple sources indicating that pricing is an issue, both in OTT and cable, could indicate an affordability issue that could have an impact on other factors, like accessibility of various events and consumers’ viewing platforms of choice.

One example of access to sport changing due to increased subscription costs stems from the 2011 Time Warner Cable deal that placed the Los Angeles Lakers’ television broadcast behind a large paywall. Prior to this deal, which took effect for the 2012-13 NBA season, the Lakers were largely accessible on over-the-air carriers, which did not require a subscription, or through much cheaper subscriptions on cable and satellite carriers with Fox Sports West (Pugmire & Flint, 2011). With the deal, the cost for viewers to watch the Lakers was projected to jump from $2.37 per month for Fox Sports West to well over $3 with Time Warner Cable. This may appear to be a small price jump on the surface, but that cost quickly adds up when considering price hikes for multiple channels in a TV subscription. For sport fans who could not afford this cost increase, they could no longer access the Lakers on their over-the-air services or Fox Sports West due to the exclusivity of the Time Warner Cable deal. This article suggested that the increased subscription cost could impact the accessibility of the Lakers for many fans in the Los Angeles area.
Changing Platforms and Impacts on Sport Access

The issue of sport access changing as leagues switch from one platform to another is also discussed in an article from Poggi and Craft (2021), who recently studied sport accessibility and how it is changing as streaming platforms continue to develop. They explained how second- and third-tier cable stations are no longer economically beneficial to their parent companies, with some of these smaller channels such as NBCSN being shut down permanently. NBCSN was a major carrier of sports like hockey and NASCAR, and when the channel folded, these sports had to find new homes on cable channels like the USA Network and streaming services like ESPN+. As channels like NBCSN become economically unfeasible to their parent companies, the ability for cable subscribers to access sports programming may change if their sport of choice is moved exclusively onto a streaming platform or behind a cable package they aren’t currently paying for.

Alex Weprin (2021) described the shifting of sports to new platforms in greater detail, explaining how various services are fighting for streaming rights for niche leagues and events. For example, in 2021, Peacock was a major hub for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, offering some events like gymnastics and track and field for free while basketball was offered under the paid tier of the service. As a result, the Olympics drove Peacock subscriptions to their highest levels since the service was launched. As every service looks for a niche, the spreading out of different sports onto multiple platforms could potentially drive the need to pay for more platforms and cause viewers to have to make a choice on which sports they are willing to pay for. When studying viewership related to streaming, there is little comprehensive research about how consumers are impacted by issues of accessibility and affordability.
Research Questions

Previous studies indicate that traditional television and over-the-top television are both still prevalent among television consumers. Additionally, there is evidence that costs for both methods of viewership are increasing due to higher subscription fees and the offering of more platforms. Based on this information, I wanted to answer the following research question: How do accessibility and affordability of televised sports impact viewership for viewers? More narrowly, I wanted to answer the following sub-questions:

SQ1: What methods are sport viewers using to access televised sport?
SQ2: How much money are individuals investing in television-related viewing costs?
SQ3: What are viewers’ main motivations for selecting their methods of viewership?

This overarching question, as well as these three sub-questions, all aim to discover if there is a relationship between viewership of live sports and the accessibility and affordability of live content. Since over-the-top television in sport has only become mainstream in America and around the world over the last six years, this study looks to answer a question that has not yet been the focal point of much research. Examining sport viewership habits in the context of traditional television as well as new mediums can provide a baseline for further research in the intersectionality of accessibility, affordability, and viewership in sport.

Methodology

To find out how accessibility and affordability of televised sports impact viewership, sport management majors were asked to complete a survey about how they access and consume live sports. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A), I distributed the survey to seven sport management classes at a Midwestern mid-major university during the Fall 2022 semester. Four of these classes had the opportunity to take the
survey during class time while the other three classes received the survey link through an online Canvas announcement. These classes were selected to gather a cross section of sport management students from freshman through senior standing. The students were not required to participate in the survey, did not receive credit or any other incentives for doing so, and provided informed consent before starting the survey (see Appendix B). The survey was administered through Qualtrics and consisted of 38 questions related to demographics, viewing options, and sport accessibility (see Appendix C).

The classes surveyed had a combined enrollment of 258 students. Some students were taking multiple classes that were surveyed, and those students were only able to take the survey once. As a result, there were likely between 200 and 225 unique students who had the opportunity to take this survey. Of those students, 89 individuals participated in the study, 85 of whom were sport management majors. These results were analyzed using qualitative methods to discover student opinions and viewing habits related to live sports. These results are specific to a narrow target audience of college-aged sport management majors, who are mostly between the ages of 18 and 23 and likely have an interest in watching live sports due to their major of choice.

**Results**

Survey responses collected from students in seven college sport management classes yielded 89 total participants for the study. Of those students, 85 (95.51%) of them were sport management majors, three studied exercise science, and one indicated another unspecified major. BGSU sport management majors are also required to have a minor. In this study, the top-three minors were marketing with 43 students (48.31%), general business with 17 students (19.10%), and entrepreneurship with 13 students (14.61%). Other minors listed included journalism, international business, and leadership. The sample was almost evenly split between 18- to 20-
Two students (2.27%) indicated that they were at least 24 years old. Sixty-six students were male and 21 were female, meaning that male students made up 75.86% of respondents while females represented the remaining 24.14%.

Two sport-specific questions were included as part of the demographic section to gauge students’ favorite sports to watch live and which devices they commonly used to follow these sports. Participants could select multiple options for both questions. The top-five sports that students watched live were football (78 students), basketball (64), baseball (51), NCAA sports (40), and hockey (35). Other commonly selected options were Olympic sports (22), golf (17), and soccer (16). Students used four main devices to follow their favorite sports during an average year. These included smartphones (70 students), smart TVs (63), computers (59), and regular TVs without smart features (48).

**Viewing Options**

Participants were asked 12 questions relating to the platforms available to them for viewing their favorite sports. Participants were given definitions of the three categories of platforms referred to in the study before they proceeded. These categories were over-the-air, cable and satellite, and over-the-top (OTT). These questions were asked to gauge how many participants used each category of television, as well as the costs and rationale for using those platforms. The participants received the following definitions to explain the differences between the three categories:

1. **Over-the-air**: A device used for accessing free television waves through the air; for example, an antenna or over-the-air channels on a smart TV
2. Cable/satellite: Television accessed through a basic subscription to a cable or satellite company (Spectrum, DirecTV, Dish, Xfinity, etc.)

3. Over-the-top (OTT): An internet-based streaming service (Netflix, Hulu, or Fox Sports Go, etc.)

Since affordability was a key component which influenced how these sport management students accessed live sports, I asked who paid for their television access. Over half of the participants (49 people, 55.68%) indicated that their parents were paying for their primary television viewing options. Thirteen students (14.77%) indicated that they were paying for it alone or sharing the cost with their roommate(s), while nine (10.23%) shared the cost with their parents. Four students listed other options, including that they did not have primary television viewing options. The annual income of the person paying for participants’ primary television viewing options largely fell into two categories: $100,000 or more (32 participants, equal to 36.36%) or $24,999 or less (29 participants, equal to 32.95%). Those in the $100,000 or more range were mostly parents while those in the $24,999 or less range were mostly students. Fourteen participants fell into the $75,000 to $99,999 range, nine were between $50,000 and $74,999, and four were in the $25,000 to $49,999 range. Thirty-eight participants, or 43.18% of students, stated that they were living with friends off-campus. Eighteen (20.45%) indicated they were living with their parents, and another 16 (18.18%) were living in a dorm. Nine students (10.23%) lived by themselves while seven students either lived in Greek housing, with a significant other, or in a different living situation not listed.

Participants mostly did not use over-the-air television, which is defined as accessing free television waves through a device such as an antenna. When asked if they used over-the-air television, 21.59% of the participants, equal to 19 individuals, said yes. For participants who had
over-the-air, I wanted to know how much they paid for an antenna and their main reasons for using it. 12 of the 19 people who had an antenna (63.16%) said that it cost $29.99 or less while the remaining seven paid anywhere between $30 and over $100. Participants’ four main reasons for having over-the-air television were: 1. watching regional sports (9 participants); 2. content access (5); 3. low cost (4); and 4. most affordable option (4). It should be noted that a low-cost platform is not necessarily the most affordable platform to an individual because multiple platforms can be considered low-cost to the participant. As a result, ‘low cost’ and ‘most affordable option’ were considered separately in this question.

Access to cable or satellite television was much higher among participants than over-the-air. Fifty-six participants (63.64%) indicated that they had access to a cable or satellite subscription, while the remainder did not. Of the 56 people who had cable or satellite television, 31 indicated that someone else paid for it while 19 were paying for it themselves. Four people split the cost with someone, and two had the cost built-in to their dorm, apartment, or house.

When asked how much their cable or satellite subscriptions cost per month, 27 people listed that someone else pays, although the individual paying was not specified. Of the people who indicated a price range, six people were each paying in three separate ranges: $29.99 or less, $30 to $59, or $60 to $89. Four people each paid between $90 and $119 or $120 and $149, while three people did not know how much their cable cost. Like over-the-air, live regional sports were the number one reason for participants to have cable or satellite television, with 37 of 56 users selecting that option. The next three reasons for having cable or satellite were for content access (30 people), ability to view on other devices or portability (20) and live out-of-market sports. Ten people listed cable or satellite as the most affordable option, while six people listed low cost.
Again, a platform can have a low cost without being the most affordable option, which creates the distinction between these two categories.

Lastly, students were asked about their access to over-the-top (OTT) television. 38.64% of participants, or 34 total, indicated that they had a subscription to OTT. This placed OTT as the second-most used platform behind cable and satellite. 19 of the 34 OTT subscribers had someone else paying for it while 12 paid for it on their own. Three people split the cost of OTT with someone else. Most OTT subscription cost totals fell into two ranges: $10 to $39 per month (11 participants) or $70 to $99 per month (10 participants) (see Figure 1). Six participants paid $40 to $69 per month, while four paid $9.99 or less. Two paid between $100 and $129, while one participant was paying at least $130 monthly for their streaming services.

The top-four reasons for OTT users to have their subscriptions were content access (26), live out-of-market sports (21), ability to view on other devices or portability (20), and live regional sports (16). 15 total participants listed it as low cost or the most affordable option. OTT users were also asked which platforms they used to consume their live sports. ESPN+ was the
favorite among participants, with 28 students indicating that they had access to the platform. Amazon Prime was just behind with 24 participants using the streaming service. 17 total participants used Hulu, with nine having the live TV package and eight using the platform without live TV. 15 students listed Netflix, while 11 participants had YouTube TV. Other popular platforms included NFL Sunday Ticket (9), HBOMax (8), and MLB TV (6).

**Accessibility to Sports Programming**

The accessibility to sports programming section follows the viewing options section of the survey and marks the second of two distinct groups of questions given to students. This section covers questions relating to participants’ access to various sports, viewing platforms, and changing viewing habits. These questions were asked to learn more about participants’ viewing habits, as well as what they would like to see improved in their sport television experience. These questions could then be used to analyze common opinions among sport management students and develop an understanding of how viewership is influenced by accessibility and affordability.

In this section, the participants were first asked which sports they wished they had more access to live on television. The top-five sports that students watched live were football, basketball, baseball, NCAA sports and hockey. In comparison, the sports that participants wished they had more access to were football (46 participants), baseball (36), NCAA sports (33), hockey (29), and basketball (28). Next, the participants were asked what they would do if a game or event they wanted to watch was not available on the services the participant already had. Participants were offered seven options in response: login share with someone who already had the service (40 participants), go to a public place like a bar or restaurant to watch (38), watch at a
friend’s house (29), start a free trial (29), use a VPN (16), not watch the event (15), or purchase a one-time subscription (5). Additionally, six individuals selected ‘other.’

In 2017, sports entered the OTT realm with Amazon Prime Video’s purchase of non-exclusive rights to stream Thursday Night Football (Hutchins et al., 2019), changing consumers’ viewing habits and the way they access over-the-air television. As a result, participants were asked if there were any over-the-air services that they had since 2017 which they no longer use. This question focused on participants who changed their platforms following that deal. Sixty-nine participants (78.41%) said that they did not drop over-the-air since 2017, while only 19 participants (21.59%) indicated that they dropped an over-the-air service during the same time frame. Of those who dropped over-the-air, participants listed over-the-air services such as regular antenna TV as programs they dropped while others listed non-OTA services such as Time Warner Cable, Peacock, Hulu with Live Sports, and NBA League Pass. When asked why they stopped using over-the-air services, students indicated that it was because the price went up (8), they weren’t using it (6), they started using a different platform (6), they could no longer afford it (4), or other (2).

The introduction of sports on OTT services also changed many individuals’ viewing habits on cable and satellite. Several more participants indicated that they no longer use cable or satellite services (25) compared to those who stopped using over-the-air (19). The cable and satellite services they stopped using were DirecTV (3 participants), Xfinity (2), cable from an unspecified company (2), Spectrum (1), Cox Contour (1), and Buckeye Broadband (1). Their reasons for discontinuing their cable or satellite services included: 1. the price went up (13); 2. they started using a different platform (12); 3. they didn’t use it (5); and 4. they could not afford it (4). Two participants selected other.
Since cable costs have continued to rise over the years, I asked what students would do if their current subscription costs rose. 45.45% of respondents (40 people) indicated that they would cancel their subscription, while 30.68% (27) said they would keep paying. 17 people listed not applicable, while four indicated that they would be willing to pay up to a certain amount before they cancelled. Two of those students said they would pay up to $120 per month, while the third would pay only $5 more per month.

For those participants using OTT, I asked about their cancellation of services, platforms dropped, and reasons for those cancellations. Only four of the 88 participants indicated that they had cancelled their OTT subscriptions since 2017, which was by far the lowest cancellation rate of the three types of platforms. Two of those participants stopped using Amazon Prime while another stopped using DirecTV. When asked why they stopped using these services, they listed that they didn’t use it (3), they started using a different platform (3), or the price went up (2). No one said that they could no longer afford it, which was a reason listed by multiple participants for both over-the-air and cable or satellite television. OTT users were also asked what they would do if their current subscription for OTT increased. Thirty-two participants (36.36%) said they would cancel, while 25 (28.41%) would keep paying. Four people listed that they would pay up to a certain amount, with two of them listing $85 as their threshold. 27 indicated that the question was not applicable to them.

All participants were given one question dedicated to the concept of login sharing. Login sharing involves a paying individual sharing their login credentials with others who are not paying, allowing them to access content for free. Participants were asked if they would purchase a subscription to a service for themselves if login sharing was no longer an option. Forty respondents (45.45%) indicated that they would purchase a subscription, 35 respondents
(39.77%) said they would not, and 13 participants (14.77%) said that they do not use login sharing.

Lastly, I asked what students would do if access to their favorite sport became unavailable. This is what happened to me when my cable access was cut off in the middle of basketball season in February of 2019. 47 students, or 53.41% of respondents, indicated that they have switched to a new platform because their favorite sport became unavailable. The other 41 students (46.59%) stated that they have not made this switch. The 47 respondents who answered yes were asked to list the platforms they stopped using and the platforms they added as a result. The most common platforms that participants stopped using included YouTube TV (8), Hulu (5), DirecTV (5), ESPN+ (2), NBCSN (2), Dish (2), and Fubo (2). Other participants stated that certain cable channels were cancelled, indicated that they purchased another platform to supplement the one they had, or stopped using a platform other than the ones already listed. To replace these services, respondents added platforms such as YouTube TV (6), Hulu (6), DirecTV Stream (5), ESPN+ (5), ESPN (3), Spectrum (3), DirectTV (2), Streameast (2), and a variety of other cable, satellite, and streaming services.

Participants were given two open-ended questions at the end of the survey to express their opinions on viewership, accessibility, and affordability. 11 responses were recorded between these two questions. Four participants believed that sports television should cost less, while three students mentioned that they did not like blackout restrictions for live sports, specifically baseball and football. Two people mentioned pirating in relation to accessing live sport content, with one saying it interested them while the other indicated that they participated in this activity. One other said that they simply watch sports on a streaming website if an event is not on TV.
To sum up the findings from the survey, BGSU sport management majors are largely living with their friends off-campus with their parents paying for their access to live television. Over 60 percent of participants had a cable or satellite subscription compared to about 39 percent for OTT and around 22 percent for over-the-air, making cable or satellite the most common platform in this sample (see Figure 2). Most participants were not paying for their own television subscriptions. Over-the-air and cable or satellite television were mostly used by participants because of access to live regional sports or content access overall. However, OTT was mostly used for content access, and out-of-market sports. The two most frequently used streaming services were ESPN+ (28 participants) and Amazon Prime (24).

Figure 2: Number of Participants Using Each Platform

Since 2017, between 20 and 30 percent of participants have stopped using an over-the-air, cable, or satellite platform, mostly due to rising costs. In contrast, only four participants, or less than 5 percent of students, have stopped using an OTT platform during the same period, with those who did stating that they didn’t use it or that they started using a different platform. 45 percent of cable or satellite users would cancel their subscriptions if the price went up while only
36 percent of OTT users would cancel in the same situation. Cable and satellite users who indicated a price they would be willing to pay before cancelling were prepared to pay $120 per month while OTT users would only pay $85. Nearly half of participants were willing to purchase a subscription to cable, satellite, or OTT platforms if login sharing was no longer an option. 53 percent of respondents switched platforms because their favorite sport became unavailable, with many of that positive and negative change happening between YouTube TV, Hulu, and DirecTV. ESPN+ was a platform that resulted in many new subscriptions while not losing as many customers. High costs and blackout restrictions were mentioned as negative experiences for participants.

These findings can be further analyzed to show the impact that access to content, as well as cost can play in sport management students’ viewing experiences. In the next section, I analyze these findings from the survey and tie them in with existing literature, ultimately addressing the research question: how sport management students’ viewing habits for sports are affected by accessibility and affordability.

Discussion

The literature suggests that increasing costs of subscription-based platforms negatively influenced consumption of live sports for college sport management students (Chen, 2019; Dubas-Fisher, 2019; Hutchins, et al., 2019; James, 2016). The results reveal that when sport management students have greater accessibility and greater affordability of viewing platforms, they are better able to view live sports. These findings lined up with my research question for this study based on the literature, which suggested that decreasing affordability of live televised sport negatively affects accessibility for fans, which therefore negatively impacts viewership. The literature also suggests that recent accessibility issues related to these rising costs and the
addition of more streaming platforms play a negative role on viewership (Poggi & Craft, 2021; Pugmire & Flint, 2011; Weprin, 2021), which lines up with the findings of my study. While many of these findings confirmed what the literature suggested, there were some unanticipated discoveries that were revealed through the survey data.

The high percentage of participants who had access to live sports content through over-the-air, cable or satellite, or over-the-top television platforms did not come as a surprise. Approximately 22 percent of respondents accessed sports using over-the-air (OTA) television, 64 percent of respondents used cable or satellite, and 39 percent had OTT. OTA’s fewer channels and narrower range of content options meant that the platform being the least commonly used viewing method met expectations. However, it was surprising to see that cable and satellite were still the main viewing platforms of choice for college sport management students.

Previous literature states that 61 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 use online streaming as their primary platform for consuming television content and that OTT had more subscribers in the United States than cable as of 2021 (Tefertiller & Sheehan, 2019; Tengeh & Udoakpan, 2021). As a result, it was expected that OTT would be the most used platform among participants, who were mostly college students between the ages of 18 and 23 years old. Despite these numbers, 25 percent more participants in this study indicated that they had subscriptions to cable or satellite than OTT. Cable and satellite were at their height of popularity as part of the TV II era (Martin & Reeves, 2001), while OTT is experiencing a rise in popularity at the time of this study, so it was expected that these numbers would be reversed.

Several reasons for the continued preference for cable can be identified. First, television affinity is higher for pre-OTT viewing platforms like cable and satellite than for online platforms and streaming services (Tefertiller & Sheehan, 2019). Sports only became available on OTT
services such as Amazon Prime, Hulu, and ESPN+ within the last 10 years. Meanwhile the surveyed population grew up during a time when cable and satellite still dominated most American homes. As a result, college students may still be heavily attached to the viewing methods that they used for most of their lives. However, the second reason has more to do with who pays for their television access, primarily their parents.

55.68 percent of respondents indicated that their parents were paying for their access to their primary television viewing options. Additionally, 31 of 56 cable or satellite users (55.36%) and 19 of 34 OTT users (55.88%) indicated that someone else was paying for their subscription. This relationship between these categories indicates that students’ viewing habits may closely line up with their parents’. In 2023, the parents of many 18-to-23-year-olds grew up in the height of the post-Fordist era in the 1970s through 1990s. Their parents are likely still heavily committed to the viewing methods that they have used for most of their lives. Since they are paying, they typically make the decisions on which platforms to purchase.

Parents often have steadier incomes and make much more money than college students. This is clearly shown when breaking down who pays for participants’ television access (see Table 1) and the income of the person who pays (see Table 2). Of the 49 individuals who indicated that their parents paid for their television access, 39 indicated that their parents made $75,000 or more per year. 12 of them made between $75,000 and $99,999 per year, while the other 27 made at least $100,000 per year (see Table 3). In contrast, all 13 students who paid for their viewing options made $24,999 per year or less while 11 of the 13 students who were splitting costs with their roommates also fell into the $24,999 or lower category.
Table 1: Who Pays for Primary Television Viewing Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person Paying for Viewing Options</th>
<th>Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I pay for it</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share the cost with my roommate(s)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents pay for it</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share the cost with my parent(s)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Annual Income of Whoever Pays for Primary Television Viewing Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income of Person Paying</th>
<th>Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$24,999 or less</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000-$49,999</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$74,999</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Crosstabs Analysis of Who Pays and That Person’s Annual Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income of Person Paying</th>
<th>$24,999 or less</th>
<th>$25,000-$49,999</th>
<th>$50,000-$74,999</th>
<th>$75,000-$99,999</th>
<th>$100,000 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pay for it</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share the cost with my roommate(s)</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents pay for it</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share the cost with my parent(s)</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>29.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in Table 3 was collected through a crosstabs analysis completed within the Qualtrics program. Highlighted data reflects the total number of participants who answered these questions.

Previous findings suggest Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 are more likely to use online streaming as their primary platform for consuming television, with OTT drawing
more subscribers in the United States than cable as of 2021 (Tefertiller & Sheehan, 2019; Tengeh & Udoakpan, 2021). The above tables reveal that sport management students may use cable as their main method of accessing sports as opposed to OTT because cost is not a direct factor for them. Future research on this topic using a sample of young professionals in their mid- to late-20s could produce results indicating higher usage of OTT than cable, which would line up with the findings presented by Tefertiller and Sheehan (2019), as well as Tengeh and Udoakpan (2021).

Tengeh and Udoakpan (2021) found that login sharing was a common behavior among OTT viewers in South Africa, specifically mentioning that this behavior regularly occurred among sports viewers. This suggests that individuals seek to view sports content without paying, which lines up with the findings in this study. The survey results show that college-age individuals often rely on their parents to pay for their television viewing options. As a result, they are not investing much of their own money into their live television if they are paying at all. Additionally, 40 of 88 participants (45.45%) indicated that they would login share with someone if they wanted to watch an event on a platform that they didn’t have. Login sharing requires someone else to pay for a service while you are accessing it for free, so the high rate of login sharing indicated in this study indicates that individuals will find ways to access their content while paying as little as possible. With 38.64 percent of respondents having access to OTT, a 45.45 percent rate of login sharing covers a large segment of respondents who either may not have OTT or may want to use a platform for which they are not paying.

According to Randy Harward (2022), some basic cable packages such as Xfinity Choice TV cost as little as $20 to $25 per month in February of 2022. One finding that was not expected was for cable and satellite users to, on occasion, pay as low of prices as they were for their
services. Of the 26 individuals who listed a price they were paying, six people each indicated they were paying $29.99 or less, $30 to $59, or $60 to $89 per month for their cable or satellite. These are numbers that I largely expected to see with OTT, where individuals can pay for individual streaming services at a cheaper rate rather than purchasing an entire cable package at a higher price. These lower-than-expected costs indicate that students may be paying for basic cable plans with low channel counts rather than premium cable packages, which tend to be more expensive.

Harward (2023) also indicated that the price range for a TV-only cable subscription from a top-15 cable provider in the United States ranged from $54.99 to $250.00 per month when excluding basic cable. The average cost for these plans was $83.35 per month, which is closer to what I was expecting individuals to pay for their cable or satellite. Since most individuals who listed a price for their cable or satellite plans fell below this average, it is likely that individuals paying for their own cable were searching for cheaper plans. However, the findings cannot confirm the cost of the cable and satellite subscriptions for the individuals who indicated that someone else was paying for their access. Further research could be done to ask students the price of their cable or satellite plans, even if someone else was paying for it, to get a better idea of how much these plans truly cost.

Costs for OTT and over-the-air television were in the range I expected due to their reputations of functioning as cheaper alternatives to cable and satellite. 63.16% of over-the-air users who purchased an antenna paid $29.99 or less. Antennas are one-time purchases, so users have access to free waves once the antenna is hooked up to their TV. Only 19 of 88 respondents (21.59%) indicated that they had over-the-air, showing that content access may be more important than low cost for most individuals. This is where OTT comes in. OTT allows users to
customize their viewing experiences more easily. This is due to the wide range of platforms available, often at lower costs than TV II options like cable and satellite. Respondents were mostly split between two payment tiers for OTT: $10 to $39 per month (32.35%) and $70 to $99 per month (29.41%). Individuals in this lower tier were likely paying for one or two cheaper services like ESPN+ or Amazon Prime Video. While paying this monthly subscription still adds up, especially with rising costs, individuals likely view the added access as a benefit for which they are willing to pay a relatively small price.

Previous literature indicated that OTT provides greater access to sports content and increased personalization while also discovering that there is not a great financial benefit of OTT over cable or satellite platforms (Chen, 2019; Hutchins et al., 2019). This is particularly shown through platforms in the upper payment tier for OTT. In this study, individuals in this tier likely had one of the more expensive platforms like Hulu + Live TV or YouTube TV, or they had a combination of several different services which added up to the average cost of cable. These individuals are willing to pay similar prices as cable to receive a wider variety of content, which removes OTT’s price advantage over cable and satellite. It can be concluded that individuals who are willing to pay more have a stronger ability to customize their viewing experiences while those who pay less may have lower ability to watch any event.

The main motivations for viewers for selecting their viewership methods were surprising when analyzing survey results. The motivations for using over-the-air and cable or satellite were similar to each other, which I was not expecting. I thought that over-the-air users would indicate cost as their main reason for using the platform while cable or satellite users would select an option related to content. However, both groups of users mentioned live regional sports as their top reason for using these platforms, with 66.07% of cable or satellite users and 47.37% of over-
the-air users selecting this option. These numbers indicate that content access may be the most important factor in determining their viewing method rather than the cost.

For OTT users, the main motivation for selection was content access, with 76.47% of respondents selecting this option. Additionally, live out-of-market sports (61.76%) and ability to view on other devices or portability (58.82%) were heavily selected, all of which lined up with my expectations. OTT platforms are often used to access multiple games from the same leagues, so fans of specific sports likely enjoy the ability to follow their favorite content in-depth using their streaming platforms of choice. For example, soccer fans can use ESPN+ to watch games from the Bundesliga (Germany), LaLiga (Spain), English Football League (England and Wales), United Soccer League (United States), and more (Kujawa, 2023). In cases like this, soccer fans can package ESPN+ with other platforms like Paramount+ to access the UEFA Champions League (Europe), Serie A (Italy), and National Women's Soccer League (United States). Using just two platforms, fans have access to most of the world's top soccer, showing how fans can easily use OTT to access out-of-market content from around the globe.

Increase options for interactivity are described in the literature as a significant predictor of platform selection (Tefertiller, 2020). The results showed that the participants often used internet-accessible devices for viewing their sports, many of which were also portable. The added portability of OTT, which can be accessed on many devices through the internet, allows individuals to use multiple devices to access sports in more than one location. With 79.55% of participants using smartphones, 71.59% using smart TVs, and 67.05% using computers to access their content, individuals clearly seem to predominantly use the internet to access their content, often through portable devices. Individuals who stopped using cable and satellite often cited a lack of interactivity as their main reason. With OTT allowing for portable access to live scores
and statistics, as well as easy methods for watching multiple games at once, portability is an important factor offered through streaming that cannot be as easily duplicated through other viewing methods.

Price increases seemed to provide the main motivation for participants to switch from cable or satellite to other options. Based on literature indicating that prices are rising for cable and satellite platforms (James, 2016; Pugmire & Flint, 2011; Tefertiller, 2020), individuals tend to be motivated to save money on their television by using other platforms like OTT and OTA, login sharing, or having someone else pay for their cable altogether. Meanwhile, the main motivation for dropping OTT is a lack of use rather than a pricing issue. Only 4.55% of respondents said that they had cancelled an OTT platform since 2017, showing a high affinity for these platforms. However, Dubas-Fisher (2019) and Chen (2019) both noted that costs for streaming services are also rising, indicating that pricing could become an issue for sports fans several years from now. With lower-cost options available for these platforms, it is easier for individuals to find platforms to suit their economic needs than it is for cable or satellite. Future research should follow these rising costs to determine if individuals begin to become frustrated with the pricing of OTT.

Some literature suggests that smaller cable stations such as NBCSN are shutting down due to a lack of economic benefit to their parent companies (Poggi & Craft, 2021). Instances like this force consumers to switch to a new service to maintain their content access as sports content moves to new platforms. Meanwhile, the fight among OTT companies for streaming rights can segment viewership between platforms, forcing individuals to choose which services for which they will continue to pay (Weprin, 2021). For users of all three platform types, following their favorite sports is an important motivator for fans when selecting their viewership methods.
53.41% of participants have switched to a new platform because their favorite sport became unavailable to them, which indicates that changing television rights can have an impact on viewership. With over half of participants already making a platform switch due to changing access, this phenomenon should be studied in future research to determine how streaming continues to segment the live sports market.

**Conclusion**

Live sports have been televised for over 80 years and impact the lives of many Americans and individuals around the world who consume content from the comfort of their own homes. During this relatively brief period, live sports transitioned from grainy, black-and-white, single-camera broadcasts to high-definition productions which use color, statistics, instant replay, and multiple camera angles to provide the immersive experience we see today. In recent years, accessibility and affordability of live sports programming are both drawing increased interest among consumers and scholars. This qualitative study collected data from sport management students at a Midwestern mid-major university to better understand how accessibility and affordability issues influence fans’ live sport viewing habits.

The study reveals that increased accessibility and affordability lead to higher levels of viewership for live sports. Sport viewers in this study primarily used cable or satellite to access their live sports, followed by over-the-top and over-the-air. Many of the individuals surveyed were not paying for their primary viewing methods, either by having their parents pay for their television or login sharing with individuals who had access to the programming they wanted. For those who were paying for their own television, many paid less than average for the cost of cable while OTT viewers were mostly split between paying $10 to $39 per month or $60 to $89 per month. Over-the-air viewers typically paid a one-time cost of less than $29.99 for an antenna to
access airwaves for free. Over-the-air and cable or satellite viewers’ main motivations for using those platforms were to access live regional sports while OTT users cited content access as their main factor. Users also used OTT to access live out-of-market sports while enjoying the ability to view their programming on multiple devices in a more portable manner. Price increases were the main motivations for cable and satellite users to switch to other platforms while OTT users cited a lack of use. Fans were also motivated to select their platforms based on access to their favorite sports, even switching from one platform to another to follow their favorite sports.

This study did have some limitations relating to the demographic surveyed in this study. The individuals who participated in the study were mostly between the ages of 18 and 23 years old, and were in a college sport management class. They were all college students who may not have full-time jobs and often are still dependents of their parents. Therefore, this study represents a specific demographic of sport viewer, and results may vary when surveying individuals of different ages, educational backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses. This study also discovered that many students do not pay for their own cable or satellite subscriptions, which participants indicated when asked how much their subscriptions cost. As a result, it is unknown how much some of these cable and satellite subscriptions cost. Price ranges of cable and satellite packages may be represented differently if individuals were asked how much the person paying for their access was spending on these packages per month.

This study provides a baseline of information relating to the relationship between accessibility and affordability and their impacts on live sports viewership of college sport management students. Future studies on this topic should consider other demographic groups to provide a more holistic picture of how different individuals are consuming their live sports content, as well as how they are impacted by accessibility and affordability. Combining these
results will create a more inclusive picture of the average fan’s live televised sports viewing experience, providing a road map for viewers to find the most budget-friendly way to access their sports content. Future sport management students should develop a clear picture of their viewing options, including price and content offered, before making their selection. Additionally, students should consider the television options included with their living accommodations and not sign a lease unless they have a guarantee that the services they expect to receive will be provided. Lastly, television companies can understand the motivations of their viewers and work to provide access to content that fans are requesting. Providers should account for the budget constraints of college students when creating pricing plans for their televised content. Television providers should also consider that many college students are using services paid for by their families. If companies begin to crack down on login sharing, students could be cut off from the content watched by the rest of their family. Therefore, companies should consider the needs of the college-aged demographic when setting their boundaries on login sharing. Creating a better understanding between viewers and providers can create a better relationship between the two groups while providing fans with the best viewing experience possible.
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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

DATE: September 19, 2022
TO: Pershelie Rohrer
FROM: Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [1865674-5] The Accessibility and Affordability of Televised Sport and Effects on Fan Viewership
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: September 19, 2022
EXPIRATION DATE: July 19, 2023
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category #7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the IRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on July 19, 2023. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

If you have any questions, please contact the Institutional Review Board at 419-372-7716 or irb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board's records.
Appendix B: Survey Consent Form

Dear BGSU Student:

You are invited to take part in a research study that explores how college students access and view live sports. By taking this survey, you will assist our understanding of how college students access and afford live sports. This information will help provide insight into an understudied area and provide a baseline for future research into sports television viewership.

The benefits of this study include the following:
1. The study benefits participants by allowing them to reflect on their own spending and viewing habits relating to sport television.
2. The study also benefits participants by allowing them to make their voices heard as college students. College students are more likely to have relatively little discretionary income and a lack of long-term permanent employment, so the study will analyze how this group is affected by these factors.
3. The study benefits the fields of sport management and communication by facilitating investigation into the understudied topic of sport streaming and by providing a foundation for future research on the topic.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you wish to participate in this study, please complete this survey that will ask you questions about your current living situation, platforms you use to watch live sports, how much you pay for live sports, the sports you watch, and your access to various viewing platforms. This survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and because the link is anonymous you will not be identified. Whether or not you participate in this survey will not affect any relationships you have, or your grade or class standing, at Bowling Green State University. The risks involved in participation are no greater than those experienced in everyday life. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you may stop taking the survey at any time.

Only the primary investigator and project advisors will have access to your answers, which will be stored and protected in Qualtrics. Some employers may use tracking software, so to protect your privacy you may want to complete the survey on a personal computer. You should clear your internet browser and page history when you have completed the survey.

By taking and completing the survey, you give consent to participate in the research study. To take the survey, please indicate that you are at least 18 years of age and click NEXT to begin.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research study, please contact Pershelle Rohrer (rohrerpe@bgsu.edu or 435-537-1802), Dr. Nancy Spencer (nspenecer@bgsu.edu) or 419-372-6927), or Dr. Jim Foust (foustj@bgsu.edu or 419-372-2077). You may also contact the Chair of the Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board (info@bgsu.edu or 419-372-7716) if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research. Please check all that apply to begin. Thank you for your consideration.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I am at least 18 years of age and consent to participate in this study.

I do not consent to participate
Appendix C: Survey Questions

How College Students Access and Consume Live Sports

Directions: Please complete this survey about how you access and consume live sports. If you choose to participate, you will remain anonymous. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation!

Demographics

What is your major?
- Sport management
- Exercise science
- Undecided
- Other

What is your minor?
- Entrepreneurship
- Marketing
- Journalism
- General business
- International business
- No minor
- Other

What is your age?
- 18-20
- 21-23
- 24+

Which of the following best reflects your gender identity?
- Female
- Male
- Nonbinary
- Transgender
- Other

What are your favorite sports to watch live?
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Football
- Golf
- Hockey
- NASCAR
- NCAA sports
• Olympics
• Soccer
• Tennis
• Other ____________

On average, how frequently do you watch sports each week?
• Less than one day per week
• One day per week
• Two days per week
• 3-5 days per week
• Every day

During an average year, which of the following devices do you typically use for following sports?
• Computer
• Smartphone
• Tablet
• Regular TV
• Smart TV
• Smart watch
• Other

Viewing Options

The following questions relate to which platforms are available to you for viewing your favorite sports. For this study, the platforms are divided into the following three categories:

• Over-the-air: A device used for accessing free television waves through the air; for example, an antenna or over-the-air channels on a smart TV
• Cable/satellite: Television accessed through a basic subscription to a cable or satellite company (Spectrum, DirecTV, Dish, Xfinity, etc.)
• Over-the-top (OTT): An internet-based streaming service (Netflix, Hulu, or Fox Sports Go, etc.)

Which of the following best describes your living situation for most of the past year?
• In a dorm
• By myself
• With parents
• With significant other
• With friends
• Greek housing
• Other

Who pays for your primary television viewing options?
• I pay for it
• I share the cost with my roommate(s)
• My parents pay for it
• I share the cost with my parent(s)
• Other ________

Which of the following best reflects the annual income of whoever pays for your primary television viewing options?
• $24,999 or less
• $25,000-$49,999
• $50,000-$74,999
• $75,000-$99,999
• $100,000 or more

If you use over-the-air, did you purchase an antenna?
• Yes
• No
• I did not purchase an antenna, but I still had access to over-the-air
• I have access to one, but someone else pays for it
• I split the cost of one

If you paid for an antenna, approximately how much did it cost?
• $29.99 or less
• $30-$59
• $60-$99
• $100 or more

If you use an antenna to watch over-the-air, which of the following reflect your reasons for having it?
• Content access
• Live regional sports
• Live out of market sports
• Low cost
• Most affordable option
• Ability to view on other devices/portability
• Other

If you use cable or satellite, do you pay for a subscription?
• Yes
• No
• I have access to one, but someone else pays for it
• I split the cost of one
• It comes with the cost of my dorm, apartment, or house

If you paid for cable or satellite, how much do you pay monthly for your package?
• $29.99 or less
• $30-$59
• $60-$89
• $90-$119
• $120-$149
• $150 or more
• Someone else pays
• I don’t know how much it costs

If you have cable or satellite, which of the following reflect your reasons for having it?
• Content access
• Live regional sports
• Live out of market sports
• Low cost
• Most affordable option
• Ability to view on other devices/portability
• Other

If you use over-the-top, do you have a subscription?
• Yes
• No
  • I have access to one, but someone else pays for it
  • I split the cost of one

If you paid for OTT, approximately what is the total cost of your subscriptions?
• $9.99 or less
• $10-$39
• $40-$69
• $70-$99
• $100-$129
• $130 or more

If you have OTT, which of the following reflect your reasons for having it?
• Content access
• Live regional sports
• Live out of market sports
• Low cost
• Most affordable option
• Ability to view on other devices/portability
• Other

If you have OTT, which platforms do you use for watching live sports?
• Amazon Prime
• DAZN
• DirecTV Stream
• ESPN+
• Flo Hockey
• FuboTV
• HBOMax
• Hulu + Live TV
• Hulu (no live TV option)
• MLB TV
• NBA League Pass
• Netflix
• NFL Sunday Ticket
• Premier League Pass
• Sling TV
• YouTube TV
• Other

**Sport Accessibility**

Which sports do you wish you had more access to watch live on television?

• Baseball
• Basketball
• Football
• Golf
• Hockey
• NASCAR
• NCAA sports
• Olympics
• Soccer
• Tennis
• Other

If a game or event you wanted to watch was not available on the services you currently have, what would you do?

• Login share with someone who has the service
• Purchase a one-time subscription
• Start a free trial
• Watch in a public place like a bar or restaurant
• Watch at a friend’s house
• Use a VPN
• I don’t watch
• Other

Are there any over-the-air services that you had since 2017 that you no longer use?

• Yes
• No

If you answered yes, which services did you stop using?
______________________

Why did you stop using these services?
• The price went up
• I could no longer afford it
• I didn’t use it
• I started using a different platform
• The platform was no longer offered
• Other

Are there any cable/satellite services that you had since 2017 that you no longer use?
• Yes
• No

If you answered yes, which services did you stop using?
______________________

Why did you stop using these services?
• The price went up
• I could no longer afford it
• I didn’t use it
• I started using a different platform
• The platform was no longer offered
• Other

If your current subscription cost for cable/satellite increased, what would you do?
• Keep paying
• Cancel
• I would be willing to pay up to: _________
• Not applicable

Are there any OTT services that you had since 2017 that you no longer use?
• Yes
• No

If you answered yes, which services did you stop using?
______________________

Why did you stop using these services?
• The price went up
• I could no longer afford it
• I didn’t use it
• I started using a different platform
• The platform was no longer offered
• Other

If your subscription cost for OTT increased, what would you do?
  • Keep paying
  • Cancel
  • I would be willing to pay up to: __________
  • Not applicable

If you use login sharing on any platforms, would you purchase a subscription for yourself if login sharing was no longer an option?
  • Yes
  • No

Have you ever switched to a new platform because access to your favorite sport became unavailable?
  • Yes
  • No

If you answered yes, what platform did you stop using?

If you answered yes, what platform did you add?

Is there anything you would like to add about the accessibility and/or affordability of how you view live sports?

Is there anything else you would like to add?