

Headline: Digital Experiences Enrich Sports Viewing: VAB's Jason Wiese

As the biggest screen in the house, television serves as the main way that most sports fans watch live games, but ancillary digital content can't be ignored. Younger consumers are ready to engage with sports, using social media as a platform to gather with other fans and to see highlight clips.

With sports fans spending more time at home during the pandemic, they relied heavily on TV to see live sports among a variety of platforms, including TV networks, regional sports networks, sports-centric streaming services and cable system apps.

"Because there's a glut of sports TV programming going on, we've heard of plenty of instances where people were putting on their favorite team on their TV, and then watching another sporting event on another device," [Jason Wiese](#), senior vice president and director of strategic insights at VAB.

Eighty percent of sports fans said that during the pandemic, TV was the centerpiece of their households. Meanwhile, 63% of sports fans have bought a bigger TV screen to watch games, and many don't mind viewing other events on a smartphone or tablet at the same time.

"This is all complementary to TV. TV still has the majority of viewership," Wiese said, adding that televised sports provide tremendous value to fans. They can watch numerous events every month for a fraction of the cost of taking a family of four to a live game.

Four Drivers of Viewership

As sports leagues and broadcasters ponder how to reach younger consumers who have many other entertainment options, four big drivers of engagement stand out, Wiese said.

Social media apps like Facebook and Twitter help fans stay directly connected with their favorite teams and players. The platforms also provide a way for fans to gather virtually in the absence of going out to sports bars or live games.

VAB found in a survey that 70% of U.S. adults ages 18 to 34 said social media keep them engaged with sports content, even if they're not hardcore fans. Highlight reels are a popular way for consumers to see sports-related programming throughout the day.

"Social media platforms like Twitter are really great with sharing highlights," Wiese said. "Conversations come off of highlights."

ESPORTS AUDIENCE GROWTH

GLOBAL | 2017-2022

- OCCASIONAL VIEWERS
- ESPORTS ENTHUSIASTS

CAGR: +15.7%
ENTHUSIASTS 2017-2022



Due to rounding, Esports Enthusiasts and Occasional Viewers do not always add up to the total audience.

Source: [Newzoo](#)

Fantasy sports which let people manage a fictional team whose record is based on the performance of real players encourages participants to keep an eye on multiple games. In addition to rooting for a favorite team, they also root for the players who are on their fantasy rosters.

Legalized sports betting is become more common in many states, giving people another reason to closely follow games.

"People who are more involved in that activity are more likely to watch sports," Wiese said.

Finally, esports events in which video gamers compete with each other are gaining popularity with viewers, and have crossover potential into traditional sports, he said.

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