

4 strengths and 2 weaknesses for the future of live sports streaming

Article

Nearly half of the US will watch live sports this year, and nearly a quarter will watch via digital, per our forecast. Live sports streaming isn't going anywhere, but as the playing field gets

more crowded, behaviors among platforms, advertisers, and consumers are shifting.

Strength: Streaming allows for niche opportunities within specific audiences.

- Amazon and CBS already offer niche streams for NFL games, bringing in celebrity guests [from Dude Perfect to Spongebob](#).
- “From a cross-promotional standpoint, just looking at the NFL bringing Amazon into the mix, the ability to talk to and extend reach across their distribution is tremendous,” said Jeremy Carey, chief investment officer of Optimum Sports, speaking this week at Advertising Week New York.
- Amazon made the most of Thursday Night Football this week, teasing Taylor Swift’s 10th studio album during the game. Meanwhile, the NFL capitalized on that momentum, changing its Twitter bio to “TNF (taylor’s version).”

Strength: Less-watched sports yield more ad opportunities.

- Carey said opportunity abounds in sports like college women’s volleyball and cricket. Carey’s focused on corporate ownership of these smaller properties, with a focus on having “more of an endemic look to help that property grow.”

Strength: Sports ads aren’t just commercials anymore.

- Viewers don’t want [long ads](#). Streaming encourages alternative formats.
- From pause ads to sponsorships, “we’re constantly talking about getting our brands to think about marketing outside of the commercial pod,” says Carey.

Strength: Digital moves viewers one step closer to ecommerce.

- Watching sports and shopping via ecommerce are still two different buckets of activity. With increased [multitasking](#), viewers are moving a bit closer to the point of sale.
- “We’re not exactly there just yet in the commercial space to be one click away from the point of purchase,” said Carey, “but we’re getting a hell of a lot closer.”

Weakness: Niche sports mean smaller audiences.

- The accessibility opportunity for sports that have been excluded from the mainstream is huge, especially for women’s sports. But these audiences aren’t yet developed on a national

scale, so advertising opportunities won't have the same impact as an NFL spot.

Weakness: Fragmentation across platforms weighs on the consumer.

- Last month, Yankees fans were irate when Aaron Judge's attempt to break a Major League Baseball home run record was streamed exclusively on [Apple TV](#). Though Judge didn't end up hitting his 61st season homer that game, the event evidenced how exclusionary major sports events can feel to consumers.
- “[Streaming] was designed to say, I’m only going to pay for what I want to watch,” said Carey. “The reality of the situation is the consumer may not win entirely right now.”

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