

# Online Sports Viewers Gain Marketer Attention

Contributed by eMarketer  
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A passionate fan base takes up viewing on PCs and mobile

Shifts in technology adoption and consumer behavior have reshaped the digital sports content ecosystem. Leagues that had avoided streaming their content are beginning to launch online and mobile subscription offerings and ad-supported streams.

And many are finding that fears of cannibalization of traditional viewing are unfounded.

“Audiences use different screens in a fluid manner depending on time of day, location and other factors,” said Paul Verna, eMarketer senior analyst and author of the new report, “Sports Video Streaming: Ready for Game Time.” “Many are multitasking on laptops, smartphones and tablets even while watching on TV at home.”

Content owners that take a proactive approach in reaching audiences on as many devices and platforms as possible are often rewarded with long-term gains in viewership and loyalty. The top four US professional sports leagues each had hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues by 2010 from the paid content, advertising and other revenue streams for their digital properties.

The same dynamics that have made traditional sports broadcasts attractive to advertisers—large, passionate, loyal and demographically specific audiences—apply to sports streaming on PCs, mobile devices and tablets.

Competitions that draw fans across time zones and geographies lend themselves to ad-supported streaming. In the past few years, college athletics’ NCAA, world soccer org FIFA, tennis’ USTA and the Olympics have capitalized on this demand by streaming virtually the entirety of their mega-events on a free, ad-supported basis. Regular- and post-season games streamed on a subscription basis also carry significant in-stream ad content.

Still, there is often unused video ad inventory in major league video streams.

“This unsold ad inventory reflects a lack of scale in the sports streaming audience and a lack of focus by content owners and distributors on monetizing this space,” said Verna. “The situation will change dramatically as more fans assimilate streaming into their media consumption routines, which, in turn, will compel leagues, broadcasters and marketers to make better use of digital platforms to reach their target audiences.”

The full report, “Sports Video Streaming: Ready for Game Time” also answers these key questions:

- How are sports leagues approaching online and mobile streaming?  
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- What is the mix between ad-supported and fee-based streaming?  
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- What opportunities does digital sports content present for marketers?  
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- What role do smartphones and tablets play in the sports content ecosystem?  
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- How does social media help sports content providers engage and grow their audiences?

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