

Sport and the Media - UK - January 2019

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This report looks at the following areas:

- Need for greater diversity in sports media is brought to the forefront
- Broadcasters hold off new subscription services for now but might struggle in the future

The FIFA World Cup dominated UK sports viewing in 2018. England's World Cup semi-final exit to Croatia attracted a peak audience of 26.5 million viewers for ITV in July 2018, making it the most watched UK TV programme since the 2012 Olympic closing ceremony. Overall 78% of sports viewers watched live football in the last 12 months.

The battle over sports rights continues to heat up as new players make pushes for major UK sports. While BT and Sky retained the majority of rights to Premier League games (for a reduced price), Amazon also stepped onto the pitch, hinting at a potential significant future competitor for the pay-TV broadcasters. Amazon is also buying up tennis rights, including the US Open, while Eurosport has got PGA Tour rights and future rights to the Olympics. BT and Sky still reign over the paid-for sports broadcasting market in the UK and the struggles of Eleven Sports indicates how difficult it is for new entrants, but there are strong indications that the broadcasting status quo will be under threat in the coming years.

Sports broadcasters have been making some efforts to improve diversity within their coverage and make content more inclusive, such as hiring more female pundits and commentators for high-profile fixtures. However, the problem of racial biases in sports media was brought in to stark focus by a furore around a recent Instagram post from footballer, Raheem Sterling, which highlighted how many improvements are needed (and increasingly demanded) to ensure sports media is truly inclusive and caters for those beyond the stereotypical straight, white male fan.



"Currently pay-TV providers have a fairly strong hold on UK sports broadcasting, making it difficult for new entrants into the market, such as Eleven Sports. However, as Amazon further pushes into the live sports arena and more sports introduce their own subscription streaming services the dominance of Sky and BT may be significantly threatened in the coming years".

– Rebecca McGrath, Senior

Media Analyst
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