

Your World First



Sports trends 2018



February 2018

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Media rights

1

New entrants into live sports media

2017 saw the live sports broadcast arena shaken by the entry of new digital players such as Facebook and Amazon. With several sports broadcast deals up for renewal in 2018, not least the English Premier League, it will be interesting to see if these players make further inroads, what sports they bid for and what form their agreements take – direct acquisition of rights or partnerships with traditional TV broadcasters.

2

Standalone OTT platforms

2017 also saw several sports-only OTT platforms such as DAZN and Eurosport-Player emerge. Several companies were said to be aiming to be the 'Netflix of Sport' in 2017, and 2018 will see if these models are a viable option for live sports broadcasts.

3

Social Media Influence

Whilst large TV broadcasters have dominated the live broadcast of sports, other online players have grasped social media to develop news outlets which are extremely popular in the 16-34 year old market. These have been popular in the US, where outlets such as Barstool Sports and Bleacher Report have dominated the online sports news market. Several of these websites, such as popular Irish based Pundit Arena, use fan generated content models. 2018 may see these websites branching out into streaming or tie ups with larger players.



EU policy

1

GDPR

The GDPR, which comes into force in May 2018, will affect all levels of sport. For example, sports governing bodies will have to make sure their use of their members' personal data is GDPR compliant which could have a knock on effect on regulatory functions such as anti-doping and illegal gambling. In recent years, wearable tech has experienced rapid growth in the sports sphere and will also need to make sure its data protection policies adhere to the GDPR. Finally, sports marketing companies which collect vital data for rights holders are also at risk. As the maximum fine for breach is 4% of annual turnover or €20 million, whichever is higher, sports entities will need to act quickly before May.

2

EU surveillance of sports organisations

The EU Commission decision, finding the International Skating Union ('ISU') in breach of competition law for imposing severe penalties on athletes participating in non-ISU competitions, is a stark reminder that sports bodies are subject to EU law like any other economic undertaking. Whilst such forays into sports governance are rare, the decision could have a knock on effect on other sports governing bodies with similar anti-competitive rules.



Esports

1

Commercial development

2018 will see the continued commercial growth of esports. As they are most popular amongst the 16-34 year old demographic, we expect to see an increasing number of brands seek to sponsor both teams and events. Further, traditional sports have already spotted the value of esports and 2018 is likely to see more sports teams sign esports players and invest in esports franchises. Legal issues such as copyright ownership in relation to the broadcasting and distribution rights of live games, are also worth keeping an eye on.

2

Regulatory developments

Given the rapid growth of esports, regulation is playing catch up. 2018 may see the development of governing bodies, player contracts, and betting regulation. It will be interesting to see to what extent these concepts are taken from traditional sports and adapted to fit esports.



Regulatory

1

FFP

From UEFA's recent Benchmarking Report, it seems that the Financial Fair Play rules are having a positive effect in Europe. However, for the rules to have any impact at the top level of the game, breaches need to have proportionate punishments and so it will be interesting to see the result of the ongoing investigations into clubs such as Paris Saint Germain.

2

Athlete Welfare

2017 saw several athlete welfare scandals across sport. With the completion of independent reviews in 2018, sports may be under increased obligations to discharge their duty of care to athletes and the employment status of certain athletes, especially those in Olympic sports, may come into question.





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