

Abstract

Televised broadcasts of college basketball, especially March Madness, continue to grow in popularity, as supported by television ratings in the past three decades since CBS was given the rights to the tournament. Thanks to advancement in technology, the network now has the ability to incorporate many new features to enhance fans' viewing experiences. This study analyzes how the utility of graphics that contain statistics have evolved within championship broadcasts. Starting in the mid-1980s and examining the championship game in five-year intervals up to the most recent title (1986-2016), the author documents evolution in the total number of graphics that appear on screen as well as their utility: the amount of screen space consumed, the length of the graphics' display on screen, and the type of statistic included. Findings reveal that graphics have become more prevalent in recent broadcasts and appear more varied in regards to content. These advancements have also improved the connection between the visual element displayed on screen and the on-air commentary, demonstrated by the length of time a broadcaster audibly highlights a statistic being displayed and the percentage of statistics used by the commentators that are accompanied by a graphic. This evolution has been beneficial in keeping viewers informed and entertained through the entirety of the broadcast, and it could be a key contributing factor in the overall popularity of March Madness.

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