

The American market's Netflix Effect in Formula One and derivations for the Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS)

Masterarbeit

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Zusammenfassung

Drive to Survive hat zu einem Boom der Formel-1-Rennserie geführt, wo sie früher ein Nischensport war: Den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika. Aufgrund dieser Streaming-Serie wird die Formel 1 heute von einigen Quellen sogar als die am schnellsten wachsende Sportart des Landes bezeichnet. Ein Literaturreview zeigt, wie Sport von der Medienberichterstattung abhängt, sowie warum und inwiefern der FIS Alpine Skiweltcup als Nischensportart in den USA betrachtet werden kann. Diese Studie untersucht daher, ob eine Streaming-Serie auch die Popularität des FIS Alpiner Skiweltcups im Land steigern kann, welche Faktoren diese Entwicklung beeinflussen und wie eine solche Streaming-Serie gestaltet sein müsste. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Streaming ein probates Mittel in der modernen Sportvermarktung ist, aber zahlreiche Faktoren den Durchbruch des Skiweltcups in den USA behindern bzw. verhindern könnten. Eine solche Streaming-Serie müsste jedenfalls einen Blick hinter die Kulissen und viel ‚Action‘ zulassen. Abgerundet wird die Arbeit von einer kritischen Betrachtung, einem Ausblick auf die weitere Forschung und praktischen Implikationen.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Drive to Survive, Nischensport, Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika, FIS Alpiner Skiweltcup, Popularitätssteigerung

Abstract

Drive to Survive led to a boom of the Formula One racing series where it used to be a niche sport: The United States of America. Due to this streaming series, some sources even consider Formula One the fastest growing sport in the country. A literature review shows how sports depend on media coverage, and why and how the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup can be considered a niche sport in the USA. Thus, this study explores whether a streaming series can increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the country, which factors influence this endeavor, and how such a streaming series would have to be designed. The results show that streaming is a tried and tested mean of modern sports marketing, but numerous factors could hinder resp. prevent the breakthrough of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the USA. In any case, such a streaming series would have to allow a look behind the scenes and plenty of 'action'. The work is rounded off with a critical review, an outlook on further research and practical implications.

Key words: Drive to Survive, niche sport, United States of America, FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, popularity increase

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1. Introduction

Although it is scientifically acknowledged that the United States of America suffer an epidemic due to obesity caused by lack of movement (Temple, 2022, p. 4253ff), sports can be deemed an essential part of the American society. Furthermore, sports are even considered indispensable in terms of their impact on the American public, the economy, and the media (Macri, 2012, p. 1). Notwithstanding that only 21.2 percent of American men and 19.1 percent of American women actively engage in daily physical activity according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.statista.com, retrieved: 12/09/2023), two in three Americans describe themselves as sports fans according to a 2023 Ipsos survey (Ivey, Newall, Rollason & Sawyer, 2023, p. 7ff). However, the United States are a commercial sports powerhouse by all means: Of the international sports market which is worth 471 billion US dollars, the United States contribute an approximate 32.5 percent (www.statista.com, retrieved: 12/09/2023), by far the largest share of any country.

Unsurprisingly, the United States' financial sports power also impacts how professional sports are marketed. In that regard, one may not be surprised that the Colorado-based media company Liberty Media agreed to acquire the European Formula One racing series' commercial rights holder in 2016 for 4.4 billion US dollars from an investment company based in Luxembourg. When the deal was announced, the United States' Formula One television audience had already grown by 40 percent since NBC's purchase of U.S. broadcasting rights in 2013 (Grynbaum, 2016) which counteracts the overall stance of the sport back then. At the time of Liberty Media's investment into Formula One, the racing series' popularity was steadily declining and trailing its previous peaks. The previous owners and then-Managing Director Bernie Ecclestone did not prioritize boosting Formula One fan engagement which, perhaps unsurprisingly, caused Liberty Media to pursue a strategic realignment of the Formula One racing series to extend the racing series' fanbase globally. This even led to a Netflix series called *Drive to Survive* that would eventually evoke a record growth of Formula One's popularity in the United States of America (Blackstock, 2022). According to different sports media columnists, the Formula One racing series has even emerged to be the fastest growing sport in the United States of America. In this regard, it has replaced the originally American NASCAR racing series as of 2022 (Eubanks, 2022), a development contrary to the likewise originally European FIS Alpine Ski World Cup.

On the one hand, the data presented within the theoretical part of this master's thesis suggests that Alpine Skiing is a well-liked sport in the United States of America although it is rooted in Europe (Aschbacher, 2010). On the other hand, the appreciation of professional skiing – especially the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup – remains under the radar in the country. Fittingly, in this regard, FIS president Johan Eliasch aims to make the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup more popular in the United States (www.sport.orf.at, retrieved: 01/14/2024). However, his approach implies that the FIS has so far left marketing considerations mostly unmentioned, not to think of applying streaming as a marketing tool which in fact has widely replaced old forms of media consumption (Colbjørnsen, Lueders & Schanke, 2021, p. 35).

1.1. Objectives and research questions

The increase of Formula One's popularity in the United States of America is virtually unanimously contributed to the Netflix series *Drive to Survive* (Burns, 2023; Schoenfeld, 2022). Although few scientific sources exist about the influence of a streaming series on the popularity increase of a sport – even less on the popularity increase in a single country – the leverage effect a streaming series may cause has been proven and is supported by media-statistical evaluations. *Drive to Survive* influenced more than half of American Formula One fans (Silverman, 2022) to become fans of the racing series. 30 percent consider *Drive to Survive* a major reason for their fandom, 23 percent think of it as a minor reason. According to Burns (2023), 22 percent of American Formula One fans think that *Drive to Survive* had a major influence on them becoming Formula One fans. However, the author also highlights that because ticket prices in Formula One are high and accessibility can be difficult, the racing series needs to be creative in the attraction of new fans.

Subsequently, in the sense of a holistic strategic marketing approach, it is important to consider streaming too since it has emerged into a major force of how televised contents are consumed, although it has not fully replaced linear television yet. As users nowadays choose from a wider range of options and due to the transformative nature of Internet-distributed programs, adjustments to the design of a media product are necessary to ensure it is deemed interesting by the audience (Colbjørnsen, Lueders & Schanke, 2021, p. 35). Hence, for the purpose of this master's thesis, this implies that close attention needs to be laid on how a streaming series can be designed to increase FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup fandom in the United States of America.

Streaming provides considerable marketing potential worth being investigated scientifically; however, whether a streaming series can effectively increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America has not been answered scientifically yet. Since a streaming series did influence Americans to become fans of a – before its publication not particularly well-liked – professional European sport as depicted in this section, a scientific gap for the research problem presented herein arises. By means of a qualitative research project for which interviews were chosen to be the method most suitable to answer the research questions below, the aim of this thesis is to investigate whether a streaming series can positively influence the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. To avoid the failure of a streaming series created to enhance the sport’s popularity in the United States, factors that influence the success of such a series are scrutinized too. Furthermore, contents which are most suitable for a streaming series to be able to the increase of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America are explored as well. Based on the pertinent theoretical backgrounds presented in the following chapter, the research questions ask as follows:

1. Can a series on a streaming platform affect the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America?

1.1. What could be beneficial and adverse factors for the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America?

1.2. How shall a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup be designed to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America?

1.2. Structure of the thesis

This master’s thesis is divided into five chapters, providing a gradual introduction into the issue investigated. Furthermore, this structure also enables the reader to immerse into the research subject without having to obtain prior knowledge as these chapters are based on each other.

The present first chapter introduces the topic and delineates the concrete problem as well as the research questions. It also outlines the objectives of this master’s thesis and confirms its actuality and relevance this way. The introduction closes by the presentation of the structure.

The second main chapter provides a profound theoretical background on the topics relevant for this master's thesis, including sports governing bodies, sports rights, the connection between sports and the media, and cultivation theory. Streaming is discussed in detail, and the connection between streaming and sports is elaborated upon. Furthermore, the connection between sports and culture is also described. Both Formula One and the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup are delineated regarding their stance in the United States of America whereas a focus is laid on the ambivalent status of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States. This chapter is based on a literature review of scientific article, textbooks, e-books, and renowned and reliable Internet sources.

Chapter three is dedicated to the research design and outlines the chosen research method, the Interview guideline as well as the sampling and transcription process. Furthermore, it describes how the analysis was conducted. Chapter four provides the category system and consists of the analysis of a streaming series as a marketing tool to enhance the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. Additionally, factors that influence the implementation as well as possible contents for such a streaming series are discussed too. In that regard, a qualitative content analysis is conducted. The concluding chapter five provides theoretical as well as practical implications. It also shows the limitations of this master's thesis and provides further research opportunities. This chapter also draws a conclusion. Further components of this work are the list of references cited herein, the list of abbreviations, the list of figures, the list of tables, and the appendix.

2. Theoretical Part

The sections of this theoretical part are built on each other to gradually introduce the subject of research. Firstly, sports governing bodies and sport rights are discussed to allow a subsequent delineation of the sports and media relationship which also includes the cultivation theory. Streaming and the Netflix Effect are considered, and the role streaming plays in sports as well as the connection of sports and culture is explored. This chapter also delineates the sports in the United States of America, and names major as well as minor sports in the country. Furthermore, this chapter discusses Formula One, especially analyzing the effect a Netflix series had on its popularity in the United States. This chapter also outlines Alpine Skiing and highlights its ambivalent status in the United States.

2.1. Governing bodies and sports rights

Sports governing bodies are institutions that strive for the development of sports at all levels in a certain territory. In that regard, it needs to be highlighted that sports governing bodies are not necessarily limited to one sport only as is the case with Federations or National Organizations for instance. Notwithstanding whether sport happens at a grassroots or senior levels in both amateur and professional categories, governing bodies need to control and supervise the respective sport, thus also setting standardized rules. Furthermore, the respective bodies guarantee periodic competitions at both national and international levels. Governing bodies protect and strive to promote the values of the respective sport or individual permutations they are responsible for (Gomez, Marti & Opazo, 2006, p. 5), but do not always have the legal rights to do so.

The relationship between governing bodies and rights holders is crucial for the external media impact of a particular sport, but it can be strained due to different commercial approaches. Rights holders often follow different goals than governing as they aim at maximizing their profits. The owners of sports rights and marketers are free in their decision about sports productions. As independent, privately organized entities, rights holders are allowed to decide themselves on whether an independent production company shall be commissioned or if the production department of the rights holder, typically an independent television channel, will handle the video production of sporting events (Eisermann, 2012, p. 7).

Regardless of whether sports events are being broadcast live or non-live productions such as a sports movie or a series are produced, the reproduction as well as the multiplication of sports content operates under highly legally framed conditions (Evens, Iosifidis & Smith, 2015, p. 720f). These corresponding rights can be either sold centrally or in a decentralized way.

The decentralized selling of sports rights gives involved sports teams or athletes the opportunity to sell exclusive or non-exclusive rights for the highest amount possible. This approach may boost the financial profit of the respective party since a top game promises a high viewer interest. Through supply and demand, a fair market price is paid for a certain game. However, all sports league or series do not only have games or competitions which are highly (commercially) attractive. Selling rights for individual competitions increases transaction costs and the long-term efficiency of the allocation of sport rights may suffer. To keep transaction costs low and to enable a long-term perspective for all parties involved, rights holders are incentivized to sell the entirety of the broadcasting rights to a television channel or a related agency (Gaede & Schewe, 2002, p. 142ff). In some countries such as the United States of America, private television channels respectively companies are the most important buyers of sports media rights (Evens, Iosifidis & Smith, 2015, p. 720ff).

Despite the importance of linear television, Eisermann (2012, p. 7) questions why sport rights are even needed, and which sports rights need the media and vice versa. Further factors that need to be considered according to the author are how sports rights holders and marketers act in the digital age and how the sports rights market generally develops digitally. Ennis (2020, p. 101ff) accentuates how the FAANG companies (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google) have progressed into the media rights market and how these companies' business models have heavily influenced the sports rights market. In some sports such as soccer in the Europe, streaming already provides 50 to 60 percent of the total revenue generated through sports rights. These figures highlight that streaming providers have emerged as constituents on the sport rights market. Nevertheless, the advent of sports as an important part of the society is historically tied to the television coverage of sporting events according to Evens, Iosifidis & Smith (2015, p. 720). However, to fully understand the symbiosis of sports and media, the exploration of other means of sports media consumption is also required.

2.2. Sports and media

“Success would never have been possible without full press coverage, not only during the events but also in every activity leading to the final stage; by portraying top athletes and describing their real or fictitious rivalries; and most of all motivating public imagination, while satisfying the need for information” (Acosta, 2002, p. 103).

Kim & Park (2017, p. 9768) outline an inseparable relationship in which both parties exert a seemingly endless and continuous influence. The authors describe a symbiotic relationship that can be referred to as “sports media” in which media outlets generate profits through sports while the latter as well as its respective contents can be transmitted through media. Furthermore, this relationship also brings new influences and a variety of changes into modern society, thus underlining the importance of this relationship which is also apportionable on the active sports participation rate of the population. On the one hand, the influence sports have on ensuring physical health has previously largely been ignored because of the medial perspective on sports that largely influences the public perception, providing an almost didactic narrative approach how the importance of sports is perceived and discussed publicly. On the other hand, due to the development of business and technology in the sports and media industry that has created seemingly endless consumption opportunities, and especially because governments promote sports participation among their citizens more frequently due to more medial communication options available, active sports participation has increased massively since 1975 (Tian, Yang & Zhang, 2023, p. 1f). Moreover, the partnership of sports and media is also very important for the development of professional sports, as the latter could not even survive or thrive without media cooperation. The success of this relationship shall be measured through four dimensions (Acosta, 2002, p. 104):

- **Effectiveness:** The production of desired results through a media partnership.
- **Continuity:** Information needs to be kept available at any time to fill a gap that arises immediately.
- **Personality:** Media representatives shall be informed about who is providing the information.
- **Openness:** High-quality sources shall be reported, the information transported shall be truthful based on facts.

Although these factors obviously refer to the coverage of live sport events, they highlight that the coverage of sports – regardless of whether it is live sports, leisure sports, or the general strategic application of media outlets as marketing tools to enhance a sports’ popularity – needs to be carefully thought through and planned accordingly. It is in the interest of all parties involved that accidents or coincidences are avoided as much as possible. Over time, sports photography, the print media, radio, and television have been utilized to cover sports (Acosta, 2022, p. 104ff); however, the relatively recent emergence of the Internet represents the most significant change to sports media.

2.2.1. Sports broadcasting

Photography is an effective means of communication; photographers can utilize the photogenic values of athletic actions in an effective way that should – whenever possible – be made possible to the written press physically or on the Internet nowadays. Notwithstanding the power of pictures, photography still mostly serves as a complement to written sports communication (Acosta, 2002, p. 106). Stamenkovic (2018, p. 93) acknowledges the “significant place” photography has in the sports press and highlights that sports photography sends a clear message to the observer. It tells “more than a thousand words” and is even described as “multidimensional arts” that can offer a wide range of sports. Sports photography thus serves as “psychophotography” that can capture and allow for a subsequent analysis of the emotional reaction of an athlete. However, the author (2018, p. 104) also highlights that photography is a complex task that freezes an athlete’s movement and that the “correlation between the photograph and the speed of a movement due to its very dynamics is negative”. Hence, sports photography only has a complementary function and supplements other forms of media which have proven to be more important in the development of the sports and media relationship.

Originally, the relationship of sports and media is rooted in print media. It can be traced back as early as 1792 when the English *Sporting Magazine* was published for the first time, a publication that focused on activities around horse-racing. In 1817, the English newspaper Morning Herald was the first daily newspaper to introduce a regularly published sports section; whereas in 1883, the *New York World* evolved into the pioneer newspaper that gave sports a specialized newsroom. Moreover, the *New York World* even created new facilities around its existing structures to cover sports (Abbas, Bi Bi, Khattak, Marwat & Waseem, 2014, p. 159).

Through print media, long lasting information can be stored and be re-read later. Facts can be related with each other and comments on events be delivered effectively. A wide array of names, places, and statistics can be reported in detail and repeatedly (Acosta, 2002, p. 104f). Thus, historically, the print media used to be the very source that delivered information regarding the past performance of athletes or the schedule of current and future sports activities to a wider audience. Due to its role as the pioneer of conveying information to the general audience about many different aspects of daily life, the written press unsurprisingly was second to none in the field of sports at its height. Nowadays, because of the increase in the volume of circulation and the enlargement of sports sections in the daily and weekly issues of newspapers, the print media still constitutes an important force in the coverage of sports. However, due to the emergence of electronic communication channels, most print media have abandoned targeting general audiences and shifted their focus to professionally serving the needs and interests of their respective target groups (Abbas et al., 2014, p. 159).

In comparison with the print media, electronic media is considerably technically more sophisticated (Abbas et al., 2014, p. 159f) with radio being the oldest form of electronic media. Although mostly relatively short, radio programs offer emotional narratives live or in delayed form. If broadcasted at peak hours, radio can generate significant public interest and offers sufficient time to involve stories and personalities too (Acosta, 2002, p. 105). Moreover, this form of media has been very important for the development of sports since it was the first to enable live reporting, giving listeners the feeling of “being there” (Beck & Bosshart, 2003, p. 9). After its invention in 1895 by the Italian Guglielmo Marconi, it took until April 11th, 1921, when the first ever sports competition was broadcasted live via radio: The boxing competition between Johnny Ray and Johnny Dundee in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Radio quickly spread among the United States. In 1927, more than 40 million people – at that time more than a third of the country’s population – listened to a live radio broadcast of a boxing fight. In 1928, radio was even introduced to the coverage of Olympic Games by broadcasting the inaugural ceremony of the 1928 Winter Olympic Games in St. Moritz, Switzerland. During its advent, radio faced significant opposition from established broadcasting institutions. At that point, the written press had such a dominant standing in the promotion of sports events that it even prevented radio from communicating official results of Olympic competitions in 1936 (Abbas et al., 2014, p. 159f).

Over the course of time, radio developed into the most important communication channel for sporting events (Abbas et al., 2014, p. 159f). Through radio coverage, it was made possible to experience the dramatic conduct of a sports event without having to be physically present, either as an athlete involved or as a spectator. Its speed and instantaneous coverage emerged to be beneficial, the ease of interconnecting radio stations and their reporters proved to be of great advantage. Radio provided unseen flexibility which allowed consumers to listen “at any time, anywhere, i.e., in the car, at the workplace, on the beach, etc.”. Although sports event organizers feared sports coverage through radio may lead to fewer people physically attending sport events, radio was instrumental in making live coverage more common (Beck & Bosshart, 2003, p. 9f) and thus played an important role in making sports coverage more frequent.

Nevertheless, radio coverage did not allow for consumers to visually observe sports events without having to be physically present at the sporting site yet. Due to the power of pictures, television has the greatest influence and farthest reach of any media type in sports. Not only does television constitute the most effective way to communicate sports through visual effects, visual aids, and backgrounds, it also serves as a communication tool for sports broadcasted live or in delayed form. It unleashes great commercial potential since it can generate discussions on situations that arise in live competitions or on general (recent) developments. Although television rights are expensive and production is costly, television is the most effective way to dramatize events and include side developments as well (Acosta, 2002, p. 105). On August 1st, 1936, this new technology was introduced to the live coverage of sporting events that would evolve to be the most important driver of the popularization of sports among the masses. The 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany, were the first sports event that was broadcasted live on television. At the time, television transmission was black-and-white, and none of nowadays technological conceptions such as replays or slow-motion were invented yet (Abbas et al., 2014, p. 160ff).

In the 1950s, television was revolutionized by the introduction of colored television transmission that especially became popular among those interested in sports. This rapid global expansion was driven by the introduction of the satellite technology during the early 1960s. This international expansion of television is considered a landmark in the relationship of sports and media since this is one of the major forces that turned the world into a “global village” (Abbas et al., 2014, p. 160ff).

World-wide transmission of sports has become the norm rather than the exception, supported by more than 2000 satellites that serve various purposes such as entertainment and sports (Abbas et al., 2014, p. 160f) which confirms television's stand as an important tool in sports. Beck and Bosshart (2003, p. 10) support the assessment of television as the most important media type in sports since the feeling of "being there" is created more strongly through images than visual effects only.

Unsurprisingly, broadcasting a sports event via television can reach more people than an onsite event (Beck & Bosshart, 2003, p. 11). Thus, visual broadcasting increases the availability of sports since sports are available to millions of consumers globally that do not have to leave their home. Watching a sports event may even be more exciting than attending in person due to the sophisticated technology and camera angles that create an almost universal point of view. Moreover, television does not only support but also popularizes sports. It has massively contributed to the globalization of sports since this is the very channel that enables the enhancement of different sports around the world most effectively. Nevertheless, there are down sides too: The sports and media symbioses may be prone to conflicts since athletes and sports managers need to willingly accept interference from television outlets as part of the deal because of increased commercial potential. Media managers even take an increasingly influential role on the scheduling of sports events since they have a heavy-weighted saying about when a sports event starts as for instance commercial breaks are imposed time-outs. In some cases, this dependence has gone so far that the departure of a media outlet and thus missing broadcasting rights revenue or less advertisement revenue can even bankrupt athletes or clubs. Some sports leagues have even adjusted their rules to make events more "televisional" (Beck & Bosshart, 2003, p. 11).

As the leading form of media in the sports-media relationship, television is also influential on shaping societal perceptions and attitudes, a phenomenon explored through the so-called cultivation theory which is explored in the following section 2.2.2. In conclusion, as outlined by Beck and Bosshart (2003, p. 11), the absence of television coverage may lead to severe commercial consequences. Subsequently, it becomes obvious that television has played a pivotal role in the commercial development of professional sports. However, its preferred standing is challenged by digitalization and the emergence of the Internet: "*The death of television has been long predicated in the digital age*" (Boyle, 2014, p. 746).

Ever since sports were first broadcasted via media, the volume of people interested in sports benefited from the popularization of professional sports among the masses. Hence, technological media advancements in the field of sports made these developments possible and continue doing so. The emergence of the Internet as another major medium in the 1990s followed a similar path and significantly changed the sports media landscape. As nowadays' fastest spreading technology, the Internet plays a major role for conventional media sources such as radio and television that largely rely upon the Internet for the dispersal of news and information. This medium is equipped with the characteristics of an efficient, reliable, and competent source of media. Like television, the Internet also has the capacity to transmit moving pictures, especially important in the field of sports. Given its extensive global reach which is estimated to be billions of consumers of viewers on the Internet even at the turn of the millennium, it comes as little surprise that the official websites of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, and the 2002 Soccer World Cup in Japan and Korea registered billions of page views within the first view weeks after their of their launch. Moreover, Internet-based consumption is not confined to a specific location but the content of one's choice can be consumed globally with the assistance of input devices (Abbas et al., 2014, p. 161).

Subsequently, the emergence of the Internet also had a tremendous impact on the relationship of sports and media. Social media networks enhance the individualization of sports media consumption since almost any person or organization involved has his or her, respectively its own account. Fans benefit as they can gather significant information on social media, an additional method to gain knowledge and read news. Social media platforms serve as online venues that connect fans to like-minded people and provide possibilities for fans to quickly receive news. The interaction with athletes or teams is further enhanced through social media since face-to-face interactions used to be limited to scripted events such as charity events or autograph signings which pretty much delivered the feeling of a one-sided relationship. Nowadays, a message can be sent to an athlete, and if he or she responds, feelings can arise that this relationship may not solely feel like a one-sided friendship. Although expressing political or social views on social media can influence one athlete's popularity, the commercial potential is enormous. For instance, the American basketball player LeBron James earns up to 300,000 US dollars per sponsored Instagram post (Abeza & Hall, 2021, p. 13ff).

Sports teams or leagues may also use social media as a catalysator to motivate their fans to open their wallets. Professional sports' activities on social media can be fitted into types: customer service, ticket sales, news updates (such as schedules or scores), interaction with the customers, sponsorship, and public relations (Abeza & Hall, 2021, p. 13ff). In conclusion, this subchapter outlines how covering sports visually can influence consumption behavior. Thus, the following section aims to describe the effects long-term exposure may have on consumers through the so-called cultivation theory.

2.2.2. Cultivation Theory

Through the cultivation theory, the long-term effects television has on the viewership can be described. This theory is based on the concepts of symbolic environment, storytelling, the symbolic function of television, television traits, the cultural model, the cultivation of value system, the multidirectional process, and cultural indicators. Especially the "symbolic function of television" serves as a boost for televised contents since cultivation is considered a form of desultory learning that results from the accumulation of exposure to television programs. This conception is embedded into "all kinds of [...] contents" television depicts, thus sports too. Moreover, these contents that viewers see on television emerge to be the basis of a mental image one forms about a particular issue (Mosharafa, 2015, p. 23ff), in the case of this master's thesis the perception of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that television may not reflect what is happening in the outside world, and thus present an artificial world that focuses on specific issues. Through the accumulation of time in front of television screens, this world becomes more real to the viewers and proves to be accessible. In this regard, the cultural model describes that television can shape viewers' perceptions culturally (Mosharafa, 2015, p. 24) which, for the aim of this master's thesis, implies that if someone is exposed to the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup for an extended period, this person may culturally adapt to it. Since television is considered pervasive and coherent, the material consumed assists in normalizing the relationship of television viewers with society. Furthermore, since this phenomenon has been vastly scientifically investigated and endorsed since the turn of the millennium, the cultivation theory can also be applied upon a changing media environment (Mosharafa, 2015, p. 23ff) although Chung, Lai & Po accentuate that the cultivation theory is "outdated" (2015, p. 8)

Nevertheless, on the other hand, although the cultivation theory is mostly scientifically associated with television, the concept of the “real world” is influenced by other forms of media as well. The usage of media, individual differences, social realities, and the program type are considered the factors that media consumption can – through the extended exposure to certain contents – affect the individual identification of viewers (Chung, Lai & Po, 2015, p. 10ff). For instance, there is an association between television viewing and the fear of sexual violence. If one person watched more crime drama than the average Flemish person does, she or he would have a higher level of perceived risk of sexual violence (Custers & Van den Bulck, 2013, p. 96ff). Transferred to this master’s thesis, this description implies that if an American watches more episodes of a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, this person’s perception towards professional Alpine Skiing may move further towards a positive or negative position. In line with this master’s thesis research subject, this Internet-based approach that has seen a significant rise during the COVID 19-pandemic in sports will be elaborated in the following subchapter: Streaming (Liu, Tan & Wu, 2022, p. 743f).

2.3. Streaming media and sports

Social media companies and on-demand media outlets constitute influential contributors on the future of how the digital media consumption landscape is shaped, especially since the way how sports contents are consumed digitally is “*changing almost daily*” (Plumley & Wilson, 2022 p. 134). In the “golden age of sports content”, consumers choose between cable television, broadcasting, and streaming providers. According to Arbanas, Auxier, Giorgio & Jarvis (2022), consumer behavior in sports is moving towards a future based upon the streaming media. “Cord cutting”, more specifically the circumvention of established but comparatively expensive television subscription models, leads towards an increased “platformization” of sports. This development can on the one hand be traced back to the popularity of television viewing in sports but on the other also to the growth of Internet-based communication technologies (Hutchins, Li & Rowe, 2019, p. 977f) such as *streaming*, the “*data transmission method in which the data can be viewed or listened to during the transmission [...] and not only after the data has been fully transmitted*” (translation of the author, www.duden.de, retrieved: 12/10/2023) whereas *media* are “*all the means of communication, as newspapers, radio, and TV, that provide the public with news, entertainment etc., usually along with advertising*” (www.collingsdictionary.com, retrieved: 12/10/2023).

Streaming media refers to the consumption of media content using an Internet connection, a definition which is further narrowed down by Mainar (2012, p. 3199) who describes that “*streaming media refers to the technology that allows the continuous flow of multimedia over the Internet*”.

The first scientifically acknowledged applications of the term *streaming* in connection with computing date back to the 1970s, although streaming only became a more commonly known term within the 1980s when this term was applied to describe data traffic and networking distribution. Nevertheless, the term still had a local designation at the time, implying for instance the simultaneous consumption of a file and the transmission of data. This would change in 1991 through the first ever long-distance audio streaming (Hoier & Spilker, 2013, p. 2067ff) and the general emergence of the Internet during the 1990s. In the second half of the 1990s, audio streaming developed rapidly with radios already providing their broadcasts via the Internet around the turn of the millennium. Internet-only radio stations also emerged, but throughout the 2000s, it was the widely common practice of file-sharing that served as a catalysator for streaming and disrupted the music industry because of mostly illegal downloads. Due to the launch of iTunes in 2003 and more specifically through the establishment of the digital audio streaming platform Spotify in 2008, the music industry was *legally* transformed through streaming. Nowadays, streaming accounts for more than 80 percent of music revenue in Scandinavia (Colbjørnsen & Spilker, 2020, p. 1211ff).

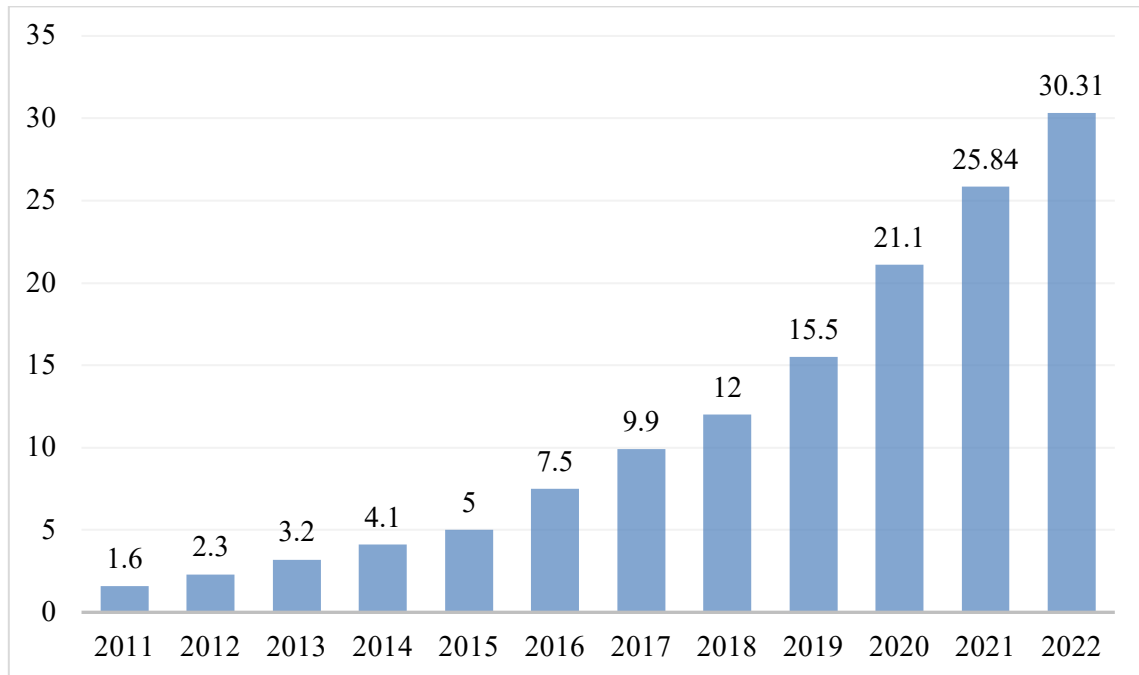
Eventually, technological hurdles were mostly abolished through the increased establishment of extended broadband connections and more efficient file-compression technologies (Colbjørnsen & Spilker, 2020, p. 1213). Through adaptive streaming, the quality of streams could be improved significantly with the adult entertainment industry being an early mover in that regard (Keilty, 2018, p. 338ff). In the 2000s, video streaming started to develop faster, especially after the launch of YouTube in 2005 which is widely considered the most significant milestone in the development of video streaming. YouTube rapidly developed into one of the most trafficked websites globally and still retains this position. In 2007, the Netflix launched a paid streaming service which enabled consumers to watch movies, documentaries, or series at any given time, only requiring an Internet connection (Colbjørnsen & Spilker, 2020, p. 1214). Considering the perspective of the television industry, the streaming technology has seen a particular rise in this so-called “post-TV era” (Strangelove, 2015, p. 198ff)

Video streaming would not have been able to develop into such an important position on the media landscape if the contents it delivers are not deemed “consumable” by the audience. In this regard, over-the-top (OTT) technology describes all contents that are delivered directly to consumers using an Internet connection. These contents are provided through streaming services, OTT providers such as Netflix, Disney+, or Hulu by which the typical set box and consumption via television is bypassed. Occasionally even called streaming TV, OTT furthermore describes a shift in consumer behavior since consumers pay for an Internet provider that provides an Internet connection which allows the consumption of video contents via platforms such as Netflix. Otherwise, consumers would pay for a cable or satellite TV provider (Plumley & Wilson, 2022 p. 134). In the era of conventional media, movie distributors, television channels, theater owners, or multiple system operators would communicate with customers. Through the advancing elimination of cable, broadcast, satellite television as well as other platforms that historically served as distributors or controllers, disintermediation is provided by OTT providers who are considered “*young and new players in the content delivery market*”. Apps installed on smartphones or websites allow direct communication between providers and the audience. OTT providers allow the consumption of video content on any Internet-connected device such as smart phones, smart TVs, desktop computers, laptops, tablets, or any other devices if an Internet connection is given (Kumar & Meena, 2023, p. 72). Since most streaming providers are based in the United States and since this master’s thesis deals with the American market, the following section considers the United States of America.

2.3.1. Streaming in the United States of America

As of 2015, 100 different streaming services were operating in the United States, both household names such as Amazon Prime as well as lesser-known services. While these services were primarily on demand-streaming providers, live streaming has since become more important too (Colbjørnsen & Spilker, 2020, p. 1214). The graphic on the following page outlines how the relevance of streaming is increasing, measured through the video-on-demand revenue generated from 2011 to 2022 in the country. This figure multiplied from 1.6 billion US dollars to more than 30 billion US dollars in 2022 (www.statista.com, retrieved: 12/16/2023) which highlights that streaming is a relatively recent phenomenon in the United States of America too.

Figure 1: Subscription video-on-demand revenue in the United States of America from 2011 to 2022



Source: Own illustration based on www.statista.com, retrieved: 12/16/2023

Note: The numbers shown above the graphs are billion US dollars.

Today, almost 50 video streaming companies operate in the USA and Canada, ranging from rather household names such as Amazon Prime, Paramount+, or Fox Sports+ to lesser-known services such as Snagfilms or Viki (Baine, 2021). They provide services to 78 percent of all American households who report being subscribed to at least one streaming service, a figure that has increased 52 percent since 2015. Allen & Durrani (2024) outline that an astounding 99 percent of American households pay for at least one streaming service. An average of 46 US dollars per month is spent on streaming services. Around 3.1 hours did the average American digital consumer spend using video streaming services in 2022, totaling 169.4 billion video streaming minutes annually in that year which constitutes an increase of 18 percent compared to 2021 (Lynch, 2023).

The emergence of Amazon Prime and DAZN as one of the most important visual sports media outlets describes how curd-cutting made its way into sports: From 2011 until 2017, pay TV penetration decreased from 87 percent to 83 percent in the United States. ESPN, part of the Disney network, had lost 5.5 million households since February 2017 at the time of this report although the channel even launched an OTT service called ESPN+ in 2018 (www.sportmediabusiness.com, retrieved: 01/06/2024).

ESPN+ provides streaming contents in two different ways, on demand or via real time-transmission. Since the distinction between live streaming and video-on-demand is essential, these two forms of streaming are elaborated in the upcoming sections.

2.3.2. Live Streaming

Live streaming constitutes an important factor in the economics of streaming since this method gives streaming the characteristics of a small community. This term is defined as the “*real-time audio and video transmission of an event over the Internet*” (Chen & Lin, 2018, p. 293) that can be interactive and moves beyond a one-sided communication stream from the respective outlet to the consumer. Live streaming allows to simultaneously consume, create, and share videos in real time on issues such as shopping, gaming, or topics related to tourism and entertainment (Kapitan, Philipps & Xu, 2023, p. 2495). The concurrent broadcast and consumption of digital media on social networks is also known as SLS: Social Live Streaming (Seifried & Qian, 2023, 113884).

Because of its massive growth, SLS has transformed the production, delivery, and consumption of digital media content. Thus, SLS services provide synergies in-between user-generated content and the participating community. Furthermore, SLS can also be considered an important factor for the increasing demand in related services (Seifried & Qian, 2023, 113884). Even before, but especially during the COVID 19-pandemic, SLS services such as Facebook live and YouTube were identified and accordingly more frequently applied as possibilities to keep consumer engagement alive. Thus, live streaming constitutes an ongoing revenue stream that plays a central role in connecting with fans. It allows for a synchronized viewing experience (Liu, Tan & Wu, 2023, p. 744).

However, copyright issues and dealing with consumers’ willingness-to-pay still constitute significant hurdles. Cyber security risks as well as the adoption of artificial intelligence technologies provide challenges to live streaming too (Sun & Zhang, 2021, 619314). Nevertheless, live streaming has become very important very quickly as the reach of the live streaming provider Twitch highlights: In 2020, 7 million streamers with over 30 million followers were attracted by the live streaming platform (Liu, Tan & Wu, 2023, p. 744). People generally become increasingly addicted to television, movies, or video blogs for the sake of entertainment (Chen & Lin, 2018, p. 294).

Live streaming moves beyond geographical boundaries and the according increase of a product's reach also benefits the visibility of for instance lesser-known sports and reshape the sports landscape and expand the global sports fanbase (www.linkedin.com [LinkedIn Post], retrieved: 12/23/2023) which, unsurprisingly, sports leagues use to their advantage. Through selling these exclusive rights to streaming providers, sports leagues are expanding their target group since the consumer base of streaming platforms is comparatively younger than traditional television viewers. Sports leagues and regional sports networks (RSN) are expanding their direct-to-consumer offerings to better control fan engagement and keep them bound in a more personalized way. Larger streaming providers are steadily further migrating into live sports, not only financially: Amazon pays 1 billion US dollars annually to stream the American NFL "Thursday Night Football" (Arbanas et al., 2022) on its platform Amazon Prime.

Through the emergence of streaming services in the live broadcasting field, the development of sport as a better product generally is enhanced. Due to the increased number of market participants, streaming competitors may seek to enhance their usage of data, attempt to improve their production quality, provide further ancillary content, or even create novel game formats. However, increasing competition on the sports market unintentionally enhances the fragmentation of an already "confusing" market. Depending on whom he or she supports, the decision of which television channel, RSN, or streaming provider to sign up for becomes complicated. This fragmentation also leads to sport leagues missing out on maximizing their commercial potential and "capturing" fans (Arbanas et al., 2022), but also highlights the interdependence of sports and media as described in section 2.2.

Since sports leagues have extended their playing season in the past and have even migrated into different time zones, the coverage of premium sports needs to be sustained even beyond the conclusion or major competitions. Especially the team sports labor market can serve as a catalysator to keep the communication about a certain kind of sport afloat. The recruiting, retention and separation of players is very often largely publicly scrutinized since the association of an individual athlete with a sports team holds considerable importance in terms of symbolic identity. Thus, player movements constitute manifold opportunities for media coverage even outside the actual live coverage (Rowe, 2011, p. 23). Such procedures almost obligate to look beyond the playfield and further inform about sports in a different way.

2.3.3. Video-on-Demand

Wirtz (2013, p. 430) defines Video-on-Demand, commonly abbreviated as VoD, as a service that enables consumers to choose a certain program through an interactive television device or a set-top-box regardless of a fixed broadcasting schedule. The author elaborates how viewers can choose their preferred program individually based on contents and the time of viewing. Moreover, consumers are provided with a database that allows to choose and watch audio-visual products individually, regardless of the device being used which can for instance be a television screen, a computer, or another electronic device (Dietl, Friedrichsen, Jenzowsky & Ratzer, 2006, p. 82). Woldt (2013, p. 115) connects the individual consumer's perspective with technological and commercial considerations: *“Video-on-demand basically includes all moving image offerings whose timely usage can be freely determined by the consumer. Main factors of the VoD market are the chosen technical distribution platform, the business model [...]. the broadness and quality of the contents offered as well as consumer usage preferences”* (translation of the author).

This statement highlights how Video-on-Demand is implemented through new technological capacities, although in a highly contested environment. Buechel & Rusche (2020, p. 18ff) describe how the streaming market is developing dynamically, measured through the increased data volume used by VoD providers at Internet knots. The authors also point out that Video-on-Demand is still mostly used by comparatively younger consumers.

Even before the COVID 19-pandemic which is widely considered a major boost for the on-demand industry, only 25 percent of those aged in-between 18 and 24 did not have any streaming subscription in 2019 in the Federal Republic of Germany (www.mckinsey.de, retrieved: 12/23/2023). These figures rise with the respective age cohorts and thus confirm the enormous economic potential of VoD as the per-capita media consumption increases with the age since certain age cohorts have a comparatively higher purchasing power. These factors as well as the description of how users tend to have more than one subscription confirm the increasing competition on the streaming market. Comparatively shorter video clips are financed through advertisements in most cases. The consumption of professionally produced movies or series can either be paid for through a one-time fee in case of individually renting or purchasing a movie, or through subscription models (Buechel & Rusche, 2020, p. 5f).

- **Subscription-Video-on-Demand (SVoD):** Platforms provide a variety of movies, series, and documentaries for which consumers pay a regular (mostly a monthly) flat fee. In most cases, all contents can not only be watched either online or be downloaded and watched offline but be consumed unlimited. Such platforms are acting with increased dynamic since they allow the frequent addition of new content and can impose timely limits on the availability of productions.
- **Transactional-Video-on-Demand (TVoD):** Users pay for the one-time-consumption of a video, the usage respectively the application of the streaming platform is limited to the individual product purchased. Consumers are only renting the respective production. For each transaction, consumers pay a price set by the platform. This model is often used to allow early access to movies that have recently been showed in movie theaters.
- **Electronic-Sell-Through (EST):** Contrary to TVoD, EST allows the downloading and unlimited watching of video content. EST can be considered the digital pendant to the physical purchase of DVDs or Blu-Rays. However, the right of use exclusively relates to the purchased video content.

Many platforms use a mixed form of financing through advertising and paid subscription models. For instance, monthly Amazon Prime subscribers are restricted to a certain number of movies, series, and documentaries. Additional productions can be consumed but need to be paid for individually, they can either be rented or purchased through TVoD or EST. Non-subscribers also have the possibility to rent or purchase contents, but they are not able to “extend” their subscription through an additional monthly fee which allows access to so-called channels. These channels are comparable to regular television channels and are rather specialized on certain categories or topics, contrary to the offerings of the regular platform. Strategically, such channels address certain niche groups, and may be focused on for instance regional movies or sports contents (Buechel & Rusche, 2020, p. 6).

This “key media technology” (Rosner & Shropshire, 2011, p. 281) allows an enhanced consumer experience through non-interrupted viewing. Within the Strategic Sport and Communication Model’s (SSCM) second segment, VoD is classified into the “emerging and social media in sport” category which includes the Internet, social networks, podcasts, and emerging technologies (Geurin, Kian, Laucella & Pederson, 2020, p. 218).

Belardinelli (2022) argues that the streaming sports market is on the edge of reaching a certain level of saturation. Platforms are moving towards overproduction and risk that consumers overlook the most attention-worthy productions because of the wide range of productions offered. Quantity is preferred over quality in some sports such as soccer, thus stressing out the limits of sports content. In markets in which a certain sport has reached a particular level of popularity as soccer has in Europe, productions about popular soccer players and widely known teams hardly provide further insights. Public interest might be “waning” and streaming platforms are “flooded with all kinds of sports narratives”, a claim not entirely dismissible considering that streaming providers invested almost 50 billion US dollars into OTT content in 2021 (www.ampereanalysis.com, retrieved: 12/30/2023), although this amount is obviously not exclusively used for sports productions.

Nowadays, moving behind the scenes is even part of some sports leagues’ strategic considerations. For instance, the NFL in-house entertainment company NFL Films attempts to remain relevant in a fractured sports media environment and aims to approach younger target groups. NFL partners with Skydance, the current producer of *The Mission Impossible* franchise, to increase its off-field fanbase. In 2023, the NFL was working on more than 50 productions, creating documentaries and multi-episode productions on platforms such as HBO Max. These productions focus on following individual athletes and showing behind-the-scenes content. According to NFL Chief Media and Business Officer Brian Rolapp, the fear of saturation can be dismissed: “*If there is a saturation point out there, we haven’t seen it*” (Morgan, 2023).

Worth being mentioned in this regard is the retired British soccer player David Beckham who – although a naturally gifted athlete – was and is mostly appreciated for his ability to be marketed as a brand gaining him attention from both fans and non-soccer fans, thus earning him significantly higher monetary benefits than equally or even more talented players because of higher commercial attention (Mason & Zheng, 2018, p. 6). This concept is known as “attention economy” and moves the core product of professional sport away from the uncertainty of game outcomes, implying that the result of a sport event is unknown prior to its staging, to the athletes themselves (Mason & Zheng, 2018, p. 10f). Thus, the focus is laid on marketing rather than the actual sport: “*It’s engagement metrics and ad inventory, official tractor partnerships and personal sponsorship deals*” (Katwala, 2022).

Action is more marketable than broadcasting sports competitions, exaggerated rivalries are preferred to a clear narrative: “*Dealing with international brands and multimillionaires with absolutely no incentive to reveal anything real*” (Katwala, 2022). Subsequently, considering Acosta’s four dimensions (2002, p. 104) as described in section 2.1., the NFL’s approach would fulfil the dimension of personality and continuity since the information providers are publicly presented to the audience and streaming platforms are available without any timely limitations. However, the dimension of openness is not realized because not all aspects shown in the series may be based on facts and thus are not entirely truthful. Whether this approach meets the dimension of effectiveness cannot be stated during the production period yet, and furthermore needs to be broken down to the individual sport respectively streaming production.

If not specifically mentioned otherwise, this master’s thesis always refers to Video-on-Demand in the upcoming sections respectively chapters. Furthermore, VoD productions can serve as marketing tools too. This is made possible through a particular practice, binge watching, that can create a certain marketing effect: The Netflix Effect.

2.3.4. Netflix Effect

Matrix (2014, p.121) acknowledges the mutual dependence of a practice called *binge watching* and the so-called Netflix Effect as well as the need to adhere customer preferences: “*The Netflix Effect that enables weekend-long binges [...] is not just about convenience and customization ... but also about connection and community*”. First impressions and individual perceptions can be shared on social media which can quickly stimulate the desire to watch the respective series. In particularly long series, consumers spend a certain time in the universe of a certain era or culture and, so to speak, even become “*roommates*” (Ihring, 2021) which highlights how the extended association with something, in this case the extensive consumption of movies or series, can bound consumers to a production through *binge watching*.

The term “binge” is scientifically associated with excess consumption and can be recognized as the overindulgence of digital media for instance. Binge watching is considered the utilization of DVDs or digital streaming channels to watch multiple episodes of a television program or a streaming series in immediate succession. This practice was first visible during the advent of DVDs since consumers were given a certain degree of control over the way they consume contents (Kazi & Zahir, 2021, p. 98f).

Nowadays, in the age of streaming services, consumers even more frequently engage in *marathon*-consecutive consumption of series (Kazi & Zahir, 2021, p. 98f). According to Izydorczyk and Starosta (2021, p. 4469ff), binge-watching has even become one of the most popular leisure activities. Moreover, the authors also acknowledge a major shift in the consumption of televised content. Consumers do not have to wait for the release of a new episode which is the regularity for traditional television where a new episode of a series may for instance be aired weekly at a prime-time slot, contrary to streaming. The American streaming provider Netflix has been an early practitioner of simultaneously releasing an entire season of a series. It is considered to have a first mover advantage enabling the practice of binge watching. Be it *Orange is the New Black* or *House of Cards*: It has been observed that consumers dive into marathon sessions and watch multiple episodes directly one after the other following the publication of a new series. In 2013, almost a tenth of all viewers even watched an entire season of the series *Arrested Development* within only twenty-four hours of the concurrent release of fifteen episodes (Matrix, 2014, p. 119ff).

During the subsequent years and especially during the COVID 19-pandemic, binge watching has further intensified. This way, video streaming has consolidated its position as a substitute of classic television through the practice of binge-watching (Kazi & Zahir, 2021, p. 97f). Through the rise of video streaming platforms, consumers have an ever-increasing number of choices to digitally entertain themselves through the Internet (Harguth, Krisch & Steinbach, 2014, p. 10).

Banerjee and Nanda (2020, p. 1212ff) emphasize that binge watching has received limited attention from the scientific community yet. Nevertheless, this practice bears significant marketing potential since a certain level of recognition is created through the permanent but subconscious observation of brands, certain topics, or the like. Although Albisser (2021, p. 2ff) cautions of overstimulation, the author delineates how the permanent consumption of content is accompanied by the subconscious perception of brands or companies. Ahmed, Fenton, Hardey & Das (2022, p. 224) outline the connection of binge watching to individual user traits and situational factors based on the consumer's previous consumption behavior. Streaming providers purposefully deploy specific user- and item-based algorithmic framing to entice viewers and engage them for longer periods of times via an individualized viewing recommendation system, although viewers with less experience are more susceptible to algorithmic manipulation.

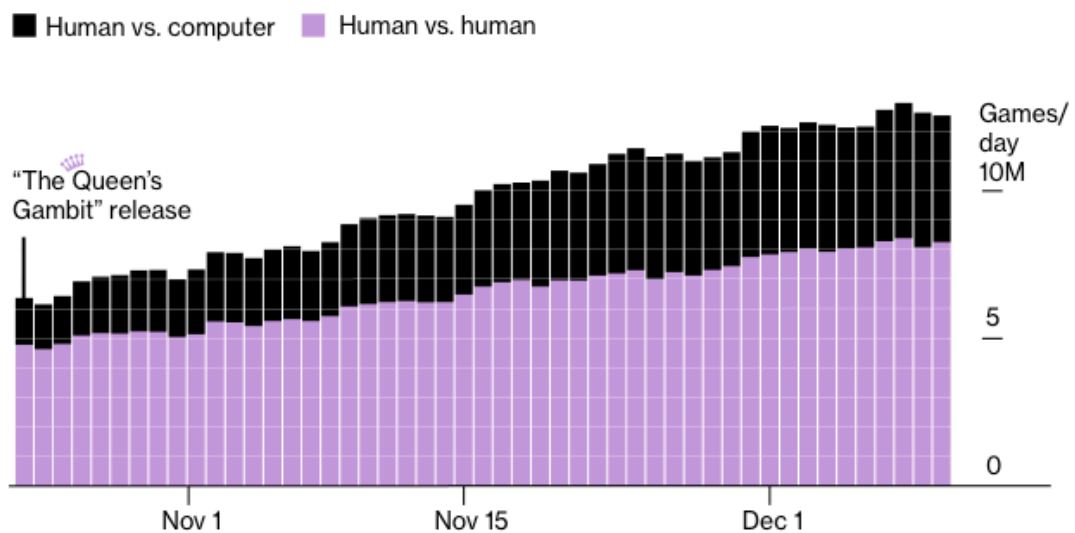
Interruptions such as advertisements negatively impact binge watching behavior. Netflix deployed a "*perfect hack*" in 2021 because of the correlation of the "randomness" of program recommendations and viewer happiness since consumers individually exhibit an addictive behavior towards a certain genre and program nature. The series *Squid Game* managed to service a global link to Korean culture and creative media because of Netflix's far reach and thus influenced mainstream taste, a phenomenon that has occurred before the advent of streaming too. For instance, the influence of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* on the history of home décor and style or the 'Harry Potter-effect' are good examples of pre-streaming era occurrences how medial publications influence consumption behavior (Ahmed et al., 2022, p. 224). Harry Potter, a movie franchise, even made children copy both their glasses and clothing style as well as their room décor from the movies and books (Ihring, 2021).

The music channel MTV was an early adopter of a combined analog and digital strategy to keep customers bound to its productions. MTV made its children's content available online in 2007 and subsequently experienced a rise in ratings for its traditional television channels (Matrix, 2014, p. 121). Nowadays, streaming providers are increasingly serving in that steering function role. The continuous release of series, where entire seasons are published all at once rather than individual episodes released one after the other, allows consumers to binge-watch series in one setting, thereby keeping them bound to a particular setting (Ihring, 2021).

Hence, the Netflix Effect describes how series and movies published on streaming platforms increasingly influence the way people consume. In some cases, the production of movies or series are even specifically built around marketing purposes. For instance, HBO Max established an own Instagram channel for the costume designers of the series *And Just Like That* to arise interest even before the actual publication. Since many consumers nowadays spend more time than ever at home in front of television screens, especially since the COVID 19-pandemic, they have even more time to let themselves inspire through movies and television shows (Ihring, 2021). Morgan (2019) considers the topic from the other side of the aisle and describes the occurrence of the Netflix Effect "*when a new series catapults an unknown actor to fame – overnight – a result of people binge watching a show*", thus outlining how binge watching and the Netflix Effect are connected. The author also highlights how Netflix enjoys a first mover advantage since the company altered its business model based on technological advancements.

Crosby (2021) accentuates how transmedia strategies further benefit the reach of Netflix productions. The author directly connects the Netflix Effect to its name bearer as a direct result from being featured in a Netflix production. Series such as *Lupin*, *Lady’s Game* or *Bridgerton* served as marketing opportunities that led to increases in sales of products presented in the image of the respective series. For instance, *The Queen’s Gambit* led to an increase of chess board sales. Only within 28 days after its release on Netflix, 62 million households around the world – more than any other scripted series on Netflix before – saw at least one episode of the series (Dottle, 2020). Thus, *The Queen’s Gambit* is a significant illustration of the Netflix Effect.

Figure 2: Number of games played each day on www.chess.com



Source: Dottle, 2020

On October 23rd, 2020, when *The Queen’s Gambit* was published on Netflix, around 6 million chess games were played on www.chess.com; whereas on December 10th, 2020, almost 12 million chess games were played. The website added 2.8 million new members in November 2020, the first full month after the series was released (Dottle, 2020).

Interestingly, the retail industry was probably the most significant beneficiary of the chess boom: Toy retailer Goliath reported a 1,100 percent increase in the sale of chess sets in November and December 2020 compared with 2019. Additionally, the U.S. Chess Federations women’s program director even hoped the soared interest would translate into a “generational effect” to boost the popularity of chess among women sustainably as the percentage of women joining www.chess.com rose by 5 percentage points after *The Queen’s Gambit* was released (Dottle, 2020).

Although the Netflix Effect is generally associated with the disruption of the relationship in-between consumers and content providers in the 21st century and especially highlights the role of the company Netflix (McDonald & Smith-Rowsey, 2016, p. 1ff), a scientific definition that summarizes the Netflix Effect as described herein has not been formulated yet, but scientific findings do support the descriptions within this section. Derrick, Gabriel and Hugenburg (2009, p. 353) argue how television programming serves as a vehicle to enhance parasocial relationships. Through the delineations of Derrick et al. (2009, p. 353), the interpretation of Ihring (2021) is confirmed; moreover, these descriptions of how the consumption of a certain program gives viewers the opportunity to immerse themselves regularly and reliably into “*a narrative about a recognizable ‘social’ world*”. This way, viewers feel more attached to a certain setting and are psychologically more closely connected to the situation depicted.

However, Nekaris & Nijman (2017, p. 84) stop short of declaring a *causal* Harry Potter effect but suggest a *delayed* effect on the bird markets of Java and Bali, Indonesia. Prior to 2002, owls constituted about <0.06 percent of all bird sales in the market, and that same figure had grown to >0.43 percent after 2008. Today, owls are even referred to as “*Burung Harry Potter*” (“Harry Potter birds”) in Indonesia because of the series’ popularity. Dempster, Oliver, Sunderland and Thistlethwaite (2016, p. 268) neither declare a causal Harry Potter effect, but describe a social development contributable to the Harry Potter series. Around the time that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* was published in 1997, concerns about boys’ ability to read and anxieties about general educational accomplishments arose in the United Kingdom. At the height of Harry Potter fandom in the mid-2000s, the British press identified the franchise as a force to enhance boys’ reading. Media concerns about children’s literacy may be gender-biased and mostly focus on boys, but boys are generally academically assumed to be less enthusiastic readers. Nevertheless, it is assumed that the Harry Potter mania had a positive impact on boys’ interest in reading (Dempster et al., 2016, p. 279).

Referring to the sources cited herein, it is proven that the concept of the ‘Netflix Effect’ has not been developed recently; however, due to lack of a scientific definition of this concept, the best way to describe the occurrence of the Netflix Effect as depicted herein by Ihring (2021) is through connecting newspaper articles, reports, or statistics. This approach will also be applied in a further section to describe how a streaming series changed the stance of Formula One racing in the United States.

In conclusion, streaming platforms revolutionized the way sports are consumed. As this section outlines, the Netflix Effect goes beyond entertainment and influences broader cultural and social aspects such as sports. To further elaborate the intertwining of sports and culture, the following section is dedicated to this connection.

2.4. Sports and culture

Sports and culture have long been intertwined, although this connection has been approached from different scientific angles. Thus, depending on the subject investigated, this intertwining can lead to vastly different outcomes. On the one hand, considering doing sports itself, Dilnoza (2023, p. 158) outlines the profound impacts sports can have on cultural-societal factors and describes how playing sports is more than a physical activity but rather a process of adaptation to society and socializing. Through this process of socialization, people learn of ways of thinking that are promoted by society such as the preference for sports in general. Moreover, the active engagement of sports can benefit the society at large. People who participate in sports are more likely to volunteer at sports events or charity giving. Even economically, the increased participation in sports can provide socio-cultural benefits such as reduced workplace absenteeism or further social impacts such as self-reported health (Dolan, Fujiwara & Kudrna, 2014, p. 10ff).

On the other side, Boyle (2009, p. 1ff) outlines the influence sports have on popular culture. The author describes how certain sports even helped construct national identities such as Rugby in New Zealand or Baseball in the United States. In 2015, Anderson (p. xi) delineated how the world has become „intoxicated“ with sports at such a level that he even considers the sports industry the world’s “most popular and profitable cultural industry“, highlighting that more than one billion people watched the 2010 FIFA World Cup finals on television. At the time of his writing, membership in the FIFA (Federation international de football association) outnumbered the United Nations by more than 20 member countries: 209 members were part of the FIFA that year. Moreover, speaking financially, the sports industry is seven times the size of the movie industry.

In further comparison with the entertainment industry which is a multibillion-dollar industries too, it is described how sports are unique as individual athletes or sports teams represent “identifiable constituents”. Sports teams are something that human beings may root for and believe in, thus feeding the human need of belonging to groups (Anderson, 2015, p. xii).

Through wearing team colors, cheering on their teams and preferred athletes and even jeering the opposing teams or athletes, sports spectators can feel this need of belonging which can provide support, friendship, or security. On the contrary, people would not follow an actor or a musician because of their ethnicity, city, or nationality (Anderson, 2015, p. xii). Thus, in the field of sports and culture, approaching the factor of nationalism is of great importance.

2.4.1. Nationalism

In sociological terms, it is deemed a challenge to provide an endless and continuous stream of reminders through “flaggings” that show one country’s flag (Seippel, 2017, p. 45). No other form of social activity in the globalized world facilitates flag waving and the playing of national anthems more than sports, although political decision makers influence the perception of this conduct either political direction or the other (Bairner, 2008, p. 43f). Sports are the most important way of bridging this gap between private and public worlds. It needs to be understood how sports matter towards how individual and collective factors are put together to create stories as well as identities that tell people who they are as parts of larger national collectives. To consider the success of a streaming series in the United States, these factors are very important as sports nationalism generally depends on a country’s inhabitants. It can be attributed to factors such as age, religious affiliation, income, sport participation, and sports attendance that positively correlate with sports nationalism. Sports not only provide “golden” opportunities to showcase the effects of individual, national, and global factors on national identities, but the scientific consideration of nationalism through sports shows how common people assign meaning to their countries through following sports (Seippel, 2017, p. 43ff).

Moreover, sports nationalism is best brought to life through the “personal pronoun model” which involves phrases such as “I” or “We” as a means of delineation between the “established” self-group of the respective nation and the “othering” of outsiders from competitor nations. Through fostering this sense of unity by frequently applying this model, especially by Western nations as a means of nation-building during the 20th century, sports can be considered an attractive tool to increase the identification with a nation state that also develops sporting traditions. The community of a nation can be brought to life through national “habitus codes” that shape and reinforce nationalist behaviors (Whigman, 2021, p. 1839ff).

Nowadays, sports portray national identities such as for instance Cricket in India and England, Ice Hockey in Canada, Field Hockey in Pakistan, or Cycling in France (Seippel, 2017, p. 43). The author also recalls American Baseball as one country seemingly sticks out of the “regular” sports and nationalism relationship: “*In the United States sport and nationalism have long been intertwined*” (Dyreson, 2013, p. 2).

This intertwining dates back as far as 1776 when Founding Father John Adams commanded Americans to celebrate future anniversaries of the Declaration of Independence with “games and sports” among other ceremonies. For the newly created United States of America, sports have suddenly become a way of expressing and celebrating the national identity. Since American athletes wanted to uphold their newly established nation’s pride and reputation against the former motherland, the United Kingdom, the country constructed nationalistic alternatives to British cricket and varieties of soccer, subsequently creating American Football and Baseball (Dyreson, 2013, p. 1ff). Every other year, this patriotism becomes particularly visible during the Olympic Games.

2.4.2. Olympic Games

The Olympic Games are considered the world’s most important international sporting event (Dyreson, 2013, p. 1). For instance, in 2012, the Summer Olympic Games in London, United Kingdom, were watched on television by over 4.8 billion people out of the global population of 7.1 billion (Pop, 2013, p. 728f).

Historically, the modern Olympic Games do not only attract worldwide interest from people of all ages, races or social positions but have always been part of the global culture. They reflect political tensions and economic crises, showcase technological developments and cultural flowering. In cultural terms, the opening ceremony is of the greatest importance as it unites four forms: Fete, competition, ceremony, and entertainment. During these opening ceremonies, cultural symbols such as the flag, the circles, the oaths, national anthems, and the Olympic flame are displayed. Values such as peace, fraternity, youth, vigor, honesty as well as respect for rules and humanity are highlighted. Through showcasing the most valuable historic, cultural, and scientific symbols as well as important personalities during this opening ceremony, the cultural spirit of the hosting nation is presented (Pop, 2013, p. 728f) which confirms the cultural importance of the Olympic Games that is also used by participating nations.

Especially athletes from the United States have subsequently used the regularity of the event to “*concoct national mythologies, shape national memories, fashion ethnic identities, encode racial typologies and americanize global processes*” (Dyreson, 2013, p. 4), thus creating national pride that, for countries, can be equated with self-respect for individuals. Subsequently, if a person feels proud about the achievements of her or his nation's athletic achievements, one is happy to be a part of “something”. Pride is a part of human being's need of belonging that may involve partners, a smaller or wider social group, and for institutions such as one's country's athletic federation. Sports offer a rich source of stories that can serve towards a direct mirror of national identity, especially to express nationality within international competitions such as the FIFA World Cup or the Olympic Games (Elling, Stokvis & Van Hilvoorde, 2010, p. 89f).

In the United States, Olympic Games are *that* event which garners the most attention among American media outlets every four years respectively every other since 1994 when the Olympic Winter Games altered their cycle. As further described within subchapter 2.5., sports media coverage in the United States usually pays the most attention to widely popular sports such as American Football. However, during Olympic Games, rather niche sports such as Skating, Sledding, Track and Field, Rowing, Swimming, Diving, or Gymnastics garner far more attention than the coverage they usually receive. Thus, the Olympic Games constitute an opportunity for “smaller” sports to market themselves, especially since the patriotic American population can root for their national team respectively fellow Americans at an international level, proven by soaring television ratings. In this regard, it perhaps does not surprise that no country has hosted Olympic Games more often than the United States. As of 2013, Summer and Winter Olympics have each been held four times in the country (Dyreson, 2013, p. 3), although American sporting events are frequently criticized for the extent of which sports and entertainment relate to each other.

2.4.3. Sports as entertainment

Sportertainment obviously merges sports and entertainment but lacks a standardized scientific definition. Moss (2010, p. 22f) describes that this term implies the convergence of sports and artistic performance. The author characterizes this approach through synchronized swimming which is set to music and follows a choreographed routine of elaborate movements in the water, incorporating gymnastics and dancing too.

Furthermore, Moss (2010, p. 23) also calls out wrestling as a fitting example for *sportertainment*. Essentially, “wrestling” is a martial art sport that dates to ancient China and involves an unarmed, hand-to-hand struggle between two contestants. However, nowadays wrestling movements are in many cases choreographed. Many forms also include an occasionally preordained, very often staged routine which is considered entertainment rather than sports, a perspective also supported by Ebert (2022). The author assesses that wrestling is essentially one of the most popular sports and entertainment programs but does not conclude whether an actual sport is hidden behind the entertaining façade. She highlights that even the main American rights holder World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) speaks of “sports entertainment”.

In this entertainment-oriented environment, the winner of a fight is determined before the actual competition takes place. A creative team within WWE is responsible for storytelling to highlight the wrestler’s characteristic traits and interpersonal relationships. Apart from commercial aspects, the creative teams’ considerations even include off-ring fights that are included in the script, and the on-site presence of a costume tailor in case storylines need to be adapted shortly. Although the author concludes that the wrestlers’ physical efforts are real, the movements around the competitions are scripted. WWE aims at providing the best entertainment possible for the audience. Like soap operas, viewers shall be hooked to the show. In that regard perhaps unsurprising, Ebert (2002). even wants to know: “*Is Wrestling real?*” (translated by the author)

Due to the decline in mankind’s ability to play sports but the excellency at watching televised content, the increasingly widespread social phenomenon sports are the favorite show for many consumers. Because the rules are easy to follow and it can be understood comparatively easily, sports are a special contribution to the entertainment industry that is about passion, drama, and suspense (Burcea, Diaconescu, Pasario, Popescu & Popescu, 2020, p. 14). The authors (2020, p. 15) accentuate how event organizers place more value on the off-field entertainment options. Furthermore, entertainment offerings at events are renovated to increase the customer experience which is the key to higher financial returns. Spectators are interested in a sport not because of the sport itself but because of the show created around it, most visible during the halftime break of the Super Bowl, an American Football event that is among the most anticipated and culturally discussed events globally. The *Super Bowl Halftime Show* unites sports, the showcasing of creative advertisements and the performances of internationally recognized music artists.

This internationally renowned halftime break goes beyond sports and is considered a part of America's popular culture due to the fanfare around the parties involved and the attention it creates (Paz, 2023, p. 1). During the *Super Bowl Halftime Show*, it becomes apparent how sports and entertainment are often mentioned in the same breath in the United States. Thus, the admiration of sports heroes in the United States does not surprise as sport constitutes an integral part of the American society.

Abdul-Jabbar (2019) draws an interesting comparison. In Paris, France, more than 50,000 people attended the funeral of the literature Nobel Prize laureate Jean-Paul Sartre, a philosopher who refused to accept his prize along with the prize money since he feared his independent thinking might wane. Regarding the funeral of Joseph Brodsky, an American immigrant who won the Nobel Prize in literature too in 1987, the author describes that there are no figures available of how many people attended. However, 150,000 people attended the funeral of Babe Ruth and 100,000 that of Muhammad Ali. Athletes are only second to parents as role models for children which confirms the importance of sporting heroes in the American society. The author even asks: "*Can most of us even name a single contemporary American philosopher or influential literary author with the ease we can a Kardashian?*" This question raises the issue why the American sports audience is so attached to cultural icons (Abdul-Jabbar, 2019).

In the United States, athletes are considered heroes because of the nature of sports. Human conflicts are created through human relationships with each other; thus, humans are used to the concept of heroes and villains. In sports, athletes can readily adapt the roles of heroes and villains, fans are attracted to familiar storylines like the good (the supported team or athlete) versus the bad (the challenger). Using the construct of conflict within sports, the building of rivalries between and among teams or individuals is a main strategy to deepen and increase fan engagement. This implies the cheering *for* the preferred team/individual and *against* another team/individual. Heroes and villains often serve as the conflict of the storytelling concept. Conjectured rivalries, power struggles, intrigue or heroism are conceptions applied. The utilization of villains can target an audience with lower engagement respectively people disengaged with the respective sport (Mueller & Sutherland, 2010, p. 20ff). In conclusion, this section illustrates the significant impact of cultural factors on the favorability of sports. However, given the frequent references to the United States and the research focus of this master's thesis, the following section considers sports in the United States of America.

2.5. Sports in the United States of America

“The United States is in love with sports” (Maynard & Pujalte, 2019, p. 1)

Nevertheless, the American society is divided about sports. On the one hand, obesity is considered an epidemic in the United States of America that first emerged in the country around the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s and would go on to spread across the entire political West. In-between 1976-1980 and 1999-2000, the number of adults considered obese rose from 15 percent to 30.9 percent during the latter period. Temple’s (2021, p. 1ff) findings consider dietary considerations to be the most significant factors towards the increase of obesity. Interestingly, the development of physical activity is even contrary to the rise of obesity; thus, on the other hand, sports consumerism is a major economic factor in the United States. Temple (2021, p. 2ff) highlights that there is no scientific evidence that indicates a fall in physical activity around the time obesity spread across the country. Even more on the contrary, the late 1970s and 1980s were the period when regular exercise became more frequent among the American population (Temple, 2021, p. 2), and furthermore the period when the perception of sports generally changed in the country.

During this period, the increasing number of Americans that value exercising is also closely connected to the increased commercialization and higher economic potential of sports generally in the United States. Through the changing perception of sports, health clubs and individual sports became typical for consumers to express their identity and lifestyle. Consumers started to spend more money on sports such as running. Sports consumerism has multiplied during this period. Furthermore, sports organizations and bodies involved in sports had to alter their market appearance accordingly. Sports became more standardized which is visible through the commercialization of lifestyle sports, making sports products more accessible to American consumers (Van der Roest, 2016, p. 363). The sports industry managed to pursue a path of growth into new economic dimensions that have also been confirmed scientifically. In 2005, around 118 million people participated in sports activities and more than 277 million people attended sporting events in the United States. Humphreys & Ruseski (2009, p. 94ff) estimated the economic value of activities in the U.S. sports markets to be in the range of 44 to 60 billion dollars in 2005. Major League Baseball games were attended by more than 74 million people which means that more than a fourth of the American population at the time attended a Baseball game in 2005 (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2009, p. 100).

Nowadays, 60 percent of Americans self-describe themselves as sports fans. In that regard, it is perhaps unsurprising that professional sports have developed a significant standing among Americans. Domestic sports leagues such as the National Hockey League (NHL), the National Basketball Association (NBA), the Major League Baseball (MLB), or the National Football League (NFL) have grown into large businesses that generate billions of dollars every year. Even collegiate sports have grown into a multimillion-dollar business (Maynard & Pujalte, 2019, p. 1f). Notwithstanding that this master's thesis deals with how the perception of a particular sport can be changed, sports in the education system need to be explained to understand which kinds of sports are chosen over other kinds of sports in the USA.

2.5.1. High School and College Sports

The perception of sports starts early on in a child's life. Because of its widespread prevalence and many school districts that legally mandate sport options for students, physical education is in many cases the dominant form of activity in schools across the entire United States of America. Participation in sports during the school phase is of especial importance for children since school sports participation boosts academic achievements (Wretman, 2017, p. 400). Although not significantly, participation in high school sports positively correlates with the preference for certain kind of sports (Garcia, 2015, p. 126). Besides Track and Field, the most common high school according to Garcia (2015, p. 125) are mostly team sports that are (in descending frequency) Football, Basketball, Lacrosse, Soccer, Baseball, Hockey, Softball, and Field Hockey.

Basketball is also the most prevalent kind of sport sanctioned by the national Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the main governing body of collegiate sports in the United States of America and Canada. As of 2017, there were a total of 2,197 Basketball male and female NCAA teams, trailed by Cross Country with 2,065 teams and 1,952 Baseball teams. Except Ice Hockey which had 240 male NCAA teams but not a single female NCAA team in 2017, there was no winter sport, or any kind of motor sports listed among the 20 most prevalent college sports. Although there are 'only' 672 American Football teams (Gaines & Nudelman, 2017), the 'Battle of Bristol' between Virginia Tech and No. 17 Tennessee in 2016 attracted 156,990 spectators which made it the most-ever attended NCAA event of all times. For the occasion, the Bristol Motor Speedway in the state of Tennessee was temporarily converted into a football stadium to enable the city of Bristol to host an event of that scale (www.waka.com, retrieved: 01/06/2024).

Since the mid-2000s, college sports have grown massively which contributed to the professionalization of these "amateur games". Although only 24 out of 230 Division 1 academic institutions achieved a financial profit with their college sports conduct at the time of Wojtys' writings (2016, p. 215), NCAA sports have grown into a business opportunity for participating universities. For instance, the University of Oregon generated 196 million dollars in revenue with its NCAA sports complex in 2015. That year, the NCAA's male Division 1 basketball tournament, commonly known as *March Madness*, generated approximately 800 million dollars in revenue for the NCAA (Wojtys, 2016, p. 215) which highlights the commercial potential and the influence of college sports on the American sports market where the media plays an important role.

2.5.2. Professional sports and the media

Financially, the professional sports industry of the United States of America is by far the largest of any country in the world. Unfortunately for the aim of this master's thesis, most sources include people's expenses for recreational activities and thus also the leisure sports market in general. Only a fraction solely considers the professional sports market which includes factors such as gate revenue, merchandising, and sponsorship. Scully (1995, p. 3) describes how professional sports have been increasingly commercialized and progressed financially since the mid-1970s, for instance through the multiplication of how much money American sport franchises sell their broadcasting rights for. A pre-digital era assessment of the author concludes that as of 1995 already, "*a financial golden age in professional sports has existed for the last fifteen years or so.*"

Although more recently published statistics and articles still confirm the commercial power of professional sports in the country, they have been significantly impacted because of the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020. Due to declining attendance caused by stay-at-home orders, sport franchises had to relinquish lots of gate revenue since teams returned to playing with a largely reduced audience or played in entirely empty stadiums. In financial figures, the size of the American sport franchise market decreased by 1.3 percentage points within a five-year period from 2018 until 2023 but still generated a total revenue of 39.3 billion US dollars in 2023. During that same period, 1,184 sports businesses employed a combined 60,481 people ([www. https://www.ibisworld.com/](https://www.ibisworld.com/), retrieved: 01/06/2024), more than the entire population of the capital of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, which 50,183 people called home in 2022 (www.census.gov, retrieved: 01/06/2024).

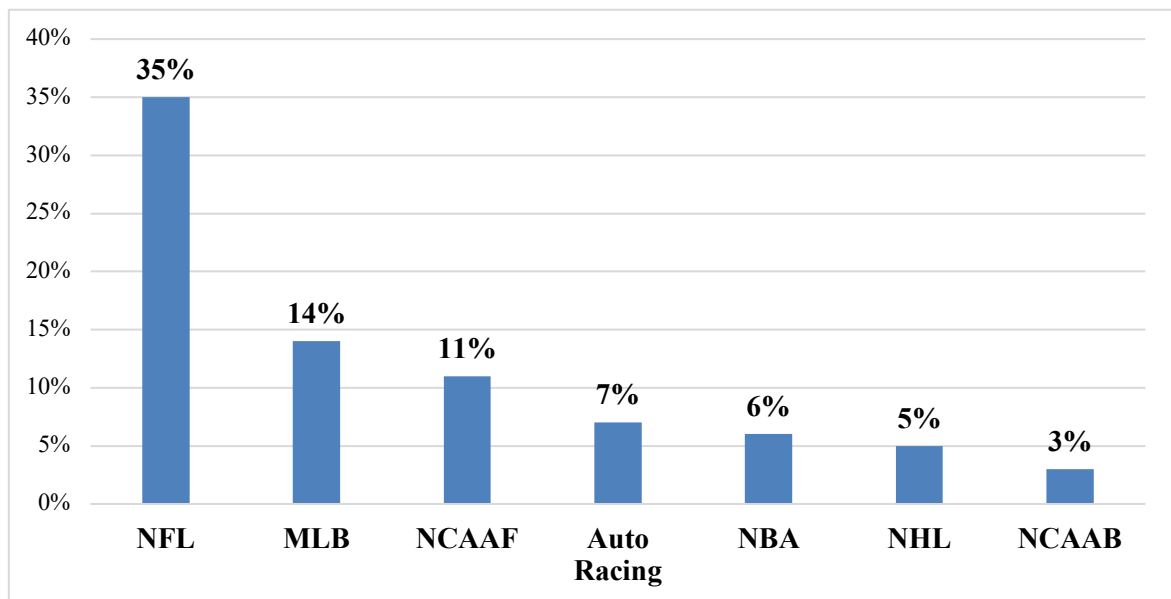
However, half of professional sports revenue is generated through broadcasting and media rights (<https://www.ibisworld.com/>, retrieved: 01/06/2024). According to Humphreys & Ruseski (2009, p. 101), the representation of sports through media outlets in the United States is so widespread that *“almost every daily newspaper in the country has a sports section and sports broadcasts appear on many local and national television and radio stations across the country.”*

The market for broadcasting rights in the United States confirms this assessment. Totally, this market was estimated to be worth 22.42 billion US dollars in 2019, by far the largest amount of any country. Four of the world’s biggest sports in terms of media revenue call the United States home: The NFL as the largest revenue-generating single sport respectively league globally at all, as well as the NBA, the MLB, and the NHL. As of August 2018, the most prevalent sport media in channels in the United States were TNT, NC Sports, Fox Sports, and both ESPN as well as ESPN2 which all reached more than 80 million American households individually. Due to the amount of content made available to the respective leagues broadcasting partners, American sports leagues also sell local rights to regional broadcasters. Moreover, since most broadcasting agreements are long-term contracts, the value of the American sports rights market does not heavily fluctuate. In this comparatively fractured environment that has changed massively since then, seven media companies are considered the “major players” covering sports in the United States: Disney, Fox, Turner, NBC, CBS, beIN, and DAZN – a streaming provider (www.sportmediabusiness.com, retrieved: 01/06/2024). The emergence of streaming platforms in sports does not focus on particular kinds of sports but generally follows the commonly popular and unpopular sports in the United States.

2.5.3. Major and niche sports

Every year since 1985, Harris Poll has conducted a survey among Americans aged 18 and older to investigate the United States’ most liked sports. Thus, it can be considered a landmark indicator for sports’ favorability in the country. Ever since its inception – for 30 consecutive years – the NFL received the most votes. This allows the assumption of American Football as the most popular American sport. In the 2013 edition of the survey, only seven percent of the participants named “Auto Racing” their favorite sport. No distinction was made in-between the different racing series prevalent in the United States. Professional Alpine Skiing has not even been listed (McGarry & Schwartz, 2014).

Figure 3: Most popular sports in the United States 2013



Source: Own illustration based on McGarry & Schwartz, 2014; retrieved: 01/07/2024

Note: All abbreviations are listed in the List of Abbreviations. NCAA stands for “National Collegiate Athletic Association” of the respective sport.

The above percentages do not tell anything about the depth of fandom; however, these figures unsurprisingly reveal that in the United States, the medial consumption of sports is widely shaped by the “Big Four” NFL, the Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Hockey League (NHL). The NFL is seemingly the most popular of these leagues: More than 105 people million watched an NFL game on television in 2005 (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2009, p. 102).

Through the sources and data presented herein, it is suggested that American Football, Baseball, and Basketball are America’s major sports. These sport leagues are all incorporated in the United States as are the racing series NASCAR and IndyCar, although at least the first-mentioned is not a niche sport. Despite the popularity of the American NHL, the favorability of other winter sports such as the Alpine Skiing remains low. This suggests that Americans prefer American sports. Thus, the following subchapters explore two originally European sports, namely Formula One racing and the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Formula One’s popularity is rising in the United States – although this is a relatively recent phenomenon that is closely connected to the advent of a streaming series.

2.6. Formula One

“Formula 1 is also a global phenomenon. Whilst in its beginning it was primarily a European championship [...] it has now become a global spectacle taking place on five continents across the world; performance has to be seen in a global, rather than a local, context” (Jenkins, Pasternak & West, 2005, p. 20).

More specifically, the United Kingdom is considered the Formula One racing series' place of birth. Most of today's constructors are based in the country. The very first officially sanctioned Formula One World Championship race was held in Silverstone, England, on May 13th, 1950. Even at that time, the popularity of the sport was outstanding: Around 100,000 people are estimated to have attended this race. King George VI was present too. During this first championship season in 1950, six out of seven races were held in Europe with the Indianapolis 500 being the only exception. Out of these six races, four Grands Prix are still contested annually. Rivaling nationalism for instance between Italians cheering for Ferrari and English fans cheering for McLaren racing also point out the European origin although its popularity has expanded globally. Drivers from Argentina or Australia became successful and popular too. Over the course of time, there have been drivers from 41 countries that competed in the racing series, and world champions have originated from 14 different nations (www.rookieroad.com, retrieved: 01/07/2024). Formula One developed into a *“global, hypermodern event, characterized by the participation of new markets and a growing global audience in both emergent and traditional Grand Prix races”* (Frawley, Herold, Joachim & Schulenkorf, 2022, p. 53).

Even during the heavily COVID 19-impacted 2020 season, the cumulative television audience of Formula One stood at 1.5 billion viewers respectively 433 million unique viewers. Although during the 2020 season only 17 Grand Prix races were held instead of the at least 20 annual Grands Prix contested annually nowadays, the racing series maintained its popularity. On average, the audience per Grand Prix was 87.4 million viewers in 2020. During the very same year, the engagement of social media followers on the racing series' digital channels (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok or Twitter) grew by 99 percent to 810 million, outperforming American sport leagues such as the NBA or PGA and even the Premier League (Frawley et al., 2022, p. 53), outlining how Formula One is expanding globally.

Measured on a year-on-year basis, Formula One achieved growth in markets such as China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom – and the United States of America (Frawley et al., 2022, p. 53), a country where the racing series historically struggled to pull itself through although the racing series attempted to break through in the country early in its history. The Federation Internationale d'Automobile (FIA) considered the Indianapolis 500 an event worth being a so-called “Grand Prix” race that could unite a predominantly European fanbase with a mostly American fanbase. However, due to the different cars being used on either side of the Atlantic Ocean, Indianapolis being away a long way from continental Europe (especially at the time) and different sanctioning bodies presiding over the respective events, the Indianapolis 500 was removed from the Formula One calendar after 1960 (Blackstock, 2022). One of the reasons Formula One has quickly retracted from the United States may be that the sport's most important institutions are all based in Europe.

2.6.1. Governing body and commercial aspects

In 1904, the *Association Internationale des Automobile Clubs Reconnus* was founded and renamed FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile) in 1947. Headquartered in Paris, France, the FIA serves as the governing body of automobile racing. A self-regulating unit that manages its 245 members as of 2017, the FIA has members in the like of national automobile clubs, associations, and national motor sport federations. From Formula One's inception until the mid-1970s, the FIA also served as the administrative organ for Formula One event promoters, thus playing a major role in the commercialization of the racing series during this time (Naess, 2018, p. 145f).

However, this status was challenged by Bernie Ecclestone in the second half of the 1970s. Although the FIA passed an initiative in 1971 to receive more financial benefits from the racing series' revenue, the former team owner Ecclestone managed to negotiate an agreement with the FIA to obtain the commercial rights of Formula One in 1981. Still known as the *Concorde Agreement*, this contract distributes the revenues of the series in-between the FIA, the participating Formula One constructors and the commercial rights holder. It is widely considered the reason why Formula One grew massively since the 1980s. Thus, contrary to other GSGBs (Global Sporting Governing Body) such as the IOC (International Olympic Committee), the FIA gave up its exclusive right to be the sole-decision maker of Formula One racing (Naess, 2018, p. 145f).

Ecclestone laid the focus of the FOG, based in London, United Kingdom, on the commercial aspects of Formula One racing. He remained CEO until 2017 (Naess, 2018, p. 149) but increasingly struggled to attract *younger* audience from the 2000s onwards, not solely but also due to his strategic focus on linear television. After the acquisition of FOG through the American company Liberty Media was completed in 2017 and the company became the sole commercial rightsholder of Formula One racing, the marketing approach of the racing series changed. Liberty Media took a hit into the group of fans that rather network and consume sports digitally via social media for instance as ticket prices are increasingly becoming less affordable. Through improvements in technology, Formula One was brought closer to the audience. Platforms such as Twitter allowed to further keep the comparatively very loyal sports fanbase bound to Formula One. Supplementing the traditional Formula One coverage via television, the digital approach helped cultivate a multi-platform experience which enables a personalized experience of the sport (Delaine & Palermo, 2023, p. 14f).

The then-serving and newly appointed CEO Chase Carey describes that motor sports viewership is fragmented because of streaming and describes how millennials and younger consumers “*want to access the sport in the ways they want*” (Talgeri, 2017). Liberty Media was widely expected to aim at increasing Formula One’s popularity in the United States, once denounced a “big island” by Bernie Ecclestone. In September 2017, it was announced that Formula One television rights in the U.S. would shift from NBC to ESPN, the self-proclaimed “worldwide leader in sports”, highlighting “Americanized” ambitions. When purchasing the commercial rightsholder of Formula One, Liberty Media was also hopeful that this move could do the same for Formula One what has happened to soccer in the United States: “*Grow it from a niche sport watch into the kind of major television happening that gets people talking around the water cooler on Monday*” (Lawrence, 2017). Thus, one cannot be surprised that a collaboration of Netflix and Formula One was announced in March 2018. Ian Holmes, Formula One media rights director, highlighted that a collaboration with Netflix is preferred because of the companies’ worldwide audience. An opportunity to attract new fans to Formula One, the series would unveil behind-the-scenes content not seen before and generally serve as a catalyst to entice new fans. Director of Commercial Operations Sean Bratches confessed: “*We are actively repositing form a motorsport company to a media and entertainment brand*” (Haring, 2018).

2.6.2. The Netflix Effect: Formula One's growth in the United States

Although the Formula One racing series has had 58 participants from the United States of America in Formula One Grand Prix races since its inception and even saw two Americans become Formula One World Champion (Abdalazem, 2023), the racing series' popularity in the country would only increase through the Netflix series *Drive to Survive*, a series developed as a part of Liberty Media's strategic realignment. The series experienced outstanding popularity through the release of its third season. Only within a few days, *Drive to Survive* even became the most-watched show on Netflix as of March 22nd, 2021 (Serra, 2022). The following facts and figures highlight today's Formula One fandom in the United States of America which strongly hints towards *Drive to Survive* as a decisive factor:

- From 2020 to 2022¹, Formula One fandom grew the fastest among any motor sport in the United States. The share of American adults that identify as “avid” or “casual” fans of the Formula One racing series grew by a third from 21 to 28 percent (Silverman, 2022).
- The popularity of Formula One was almost even with the American IndyCar racing series of which 29 percent were identified as fans of in Silverman's (2022) survey.
- 57 percent of American adults that identified as Formula One fans became fans within the past five years (2017-2022), and 26 percent became fans in the year prior to the survey described by Silverman (2022).
- The 2022 Miami Grand Prix was the most-watched Formula One Grand Prix ever broadcasted live up to this date in the United States with 2.58 million viewers on average. An average of 735,000 viewers in the important age group 18-49 tuned in (Brittle, 2022).
- Compared with 2020, the first five races of the 2022 Formula One season generally were a television success. An average of 1.4 million viewers per race imply an increase of 131 percent with 2020 (Brittle, 2022).
- The figures in the above paragraph are even more impressive compared with the 2017 average television audience: 483,000 viewers tuned in to watch Formula One in that year (Nelson, 2021).

¹ The first season of *Drive to Survive* was published in 2019.

This development contradicts how Formula One was originally viewed after 2007 when Formula One left behind the country because of the “bizarre” 2005 United States Grand Prix at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway when only six cars started a Grand Prix during a tire-malfunction-plagued weekend. In 2012, the racing series returned to the United States at the purpose-built Circuit of The Americas, based in Austin, the capital of the state of Texas that considers itself the “live music capital of the world”. 117,500 people attended the Grand Prix weekend in November 2012. This return, although way prior to the engagement of Liberty Media in Formula One, was mainly considered a marketing opportunity, and a 24-hour festival of live music (Holt, 2012) closed the bridge to entertainment that could nowadays be considered a harbinger. Steinrisser (2023) describes how the Americanization of Formula One has completely changed Formula One’s perception in the country, the author considers Netflix as the development’s most important pillar since Netflix had “*everything that Formula One needed*” (translation of the author) and soon made the paddock talk of the “Netflix Effect”. In 2021, Formula One has ascended into a popularity it has not seen before in the country. 400,000 people attendees are not only a 51 percent increase compared with 2018 when 264,000 people visited the United States Grand Prix, but according to a renowned sports business journalist (Pompliano [Tweet], 2021) confirm the effect: “*The Netflix effect is real*”. Eubanks (2022) argues that NASCAR has been replaced by Formula 1 as the fastest growing sport in the United States.

As of 2024, Formula One is “*accepted*” by the major US sports leagues and allowed to “*sit at their table*” according to today’s CEO Stefano Domenicali. The United States have become Formula One’s most important market from a sponsorship perspective, the advertisement partnerships and business volumes have tripled since 2017. In 2022, the racing series even expanded to Miami where the series races on the parking of the NFL’s Miami Dolphins’ Hard Rock Stadium. The “Miami Club” can harbor up to 850 VIP guests – but Las Vegas moves even further. For the first time in 2023, the racing series held a Grand Prix on the infamous Las Vegas Strip. On the occasion, Formula One even invested 500 million dollars to purchase a lot adjacent to the Las Vegas Boulevard where a permanent pit building was constructed. Furthermore, the three-story “Las Vegas Club” and the visibility of celebrities is admired by partners of Formula One constructors because of their commercial significance. Contrary to other Grands Prix, the Las Vegas Grand Prix is organized and marketed by the FOG itself (Steinrisser, 2024).

The increased visibility attracts American investors that have invested into the constructors Williams, McLaren, and Alpine. An obvious sign for “Americanization”, Formula One teams are developing into sport franchises but are on the other hand also increasingly dependent on sports entertainment. *Drive to Survive* has been criticized because of artificially sharpened stories and imaginary rivalries. The series furthermore divided the Formula One community, reigning World Champion Max Verstappen even refused to participate at the beginning of the series. Bigger Formula One teams turn the series into political potential. At the 2022 Canadian Grand Prix, Toto Wolff, Christian Horner and Mattia Binotto, heads of Mercedes, Red Bull Racing and Ferrari respectively, got engaged in lively discussions during a team principals meeting which other team principles openly denounced as “*theater for the cameras*”. Smaller teams such as North Carolina-based Haas F1 Racing use the opportunity to promote themselves since they have “*nothing to lose*”. Guenther Steiner, team principal of Haas F1 Racing at that time, gained significant popularity and even published a book that, somewhat ironically, is called “*Surviving to Drive*” (Steinrisser, 2024).

Despite the entertainment-related criticism, Formula One opened its doors for the movie industry and started filming a movie project at the 2023 British Grand Prix. Although still nameless, a movie financed by Apple, produced by Jerry Bruckheimer and directed by Joseph Kosinski that even stars no one less than Brad Pitt in the leading role, is considered the next step in its marketing strategy. *Drive to Survive* is considered a success, but only an intermediate step. Ferrari and Mercedes, two major constructors that refused to participate in *Drive to Survive* at the beginning of the series, have come onboard and are fully supportive of the project. British Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton even co-produces the movie (Steinrisser, 2024).

In conclusion, this chapter suggests that the popularity of an originally European sport that was historically a niche sport in the United States increased because of the effects caused by the success of a streaming series. Although this issue has barely been investigated scientifically and thus scientific literature or evidence about the Netflix Effect as defined herein barely exists, a strong connection between the sport’s popularity and *Drive to Survive* is established. Formula One’s economic development and strategic realignment towards a rather entertainment-driven perspective can be traced back to the popularity in the United States which would not have been possible without *Drive to Survive*.

2.7. FIS Alpine Ski World Cup

Due to the scope of this master's thesis, this section elaborates the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. To prevent any kind of confusion caused by terminology, "Skiing" always refers to Alpine Skiing within this master's thesis. If not specifically mentioned, cross-country skiing is not considered herein. Before an overview of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is provided and its status in the United States is cleared, sport-specific circumstances are considered.

2.7.1. Alpine Skiing: Limitations and benefits

Globally, Alpine Skiing has an ambivalent position. The active participation in Alpine skiing varies significantly between countries and even among different regions within the same country. The public perception of professional Alpine Skiing is not globally evenly distributed. However, notwithstanding that Alpine Skiing is geographically limited, there are still more than 6,000 ski resorts globally on every continent except Antarctica, implying that Alpine Skiing is a sport that is practiced on every permanently inhabited continent (Brent, 2022).

Most of the world's ski resorts are in developed countries, especially in countries of the Northern Hemisphere, although a comparatively small number of ski resorts exist in the Southern Hemisphere too. For some time, Alpine Skiing was even possible in the equatorial region. A glacier in Bolivia just south of the equator allowed for year-round skiing. However, this world's highest-reaching ski resort that elevated up to 17,785 feet was eventually closed because of the "unprecedented" glacial retreat. In Africa, Alpine Skiing is limited to Morocco and South Africa. This example can be used to describe the general global stance of Alpine Skiing: Although many places receive snow through the year, most of the earth does not have close-by ski resorts. Obviously, this assessment does not take off-slope skiing into account (Brent, 2022).

Alpine Skiing is a "clustered" sport that is obviously tied to regions where mountain slopes and corresponding terrains allow for Alpine Skiing. Smaller clusters exist in the West of the United States and Canada, the Midwestern United States, Southeastern Canada, the Andes region in South America, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden. The concentration of Alpine Skiing resorts is the highest in Japan, the Northeastern United States of America, and especially within Continental Europe in the Alpine region (Brent, 2022).

Figure 4: The Alps: The home of Alpine traditions



Source: www.skitheworldwithnathalie.com, retrieved: 03/31/2024

Because of its nature as an outdoor sport, Alpine Skiing is a seasonally limited sport because of its dependency on snow respectively the colder part of the year. As a rule of thumb, ski resorts are in operation from October until April or May in the Northern Hemisphere. In the Southern Hemisphere, ski resorts usually begin operations at the beginning of the Southern Winter in June and remain open until the end of spring around October or November. However, both hemispheres' winter seasons heavily depend on snowfall to allow snowpacks for ski slopes. Rather than a late season snowstorm that may allow a late-season influx of tourists, ski resorts prefer to receive snowfall throughout the year respectively winter season to enable Alpine Skiing throughout (McCullough, 2022).

2.7.2. FIS Alpine Ski World Cup: Governing body and commercial aspects

In 1910, the Norwegian-run International Ski Commission met in Christiania, Norway (known as Oslo today) for the first time. After the first world war, the organization was renamed FIS, *Federation Internationale de Ski*, that was, despite its French title, run by Scandinavian officials in its early years (Allen, 2012, p. 10). Today, the international governing body for skiing and snowboarding is known as the *International Ski and Snowboard Federation* and is headquartered in Oberhofen, Switzerland. FIS manages competitions in Alpine Skiing, Cross-Country Skiing, Ski Jumping, Nordic Combined, Freestyle Skiing, and Snowboarding. Its tasks include setting the international competition rules and promoting snow activities as healthy leisure recreation among its 135 member-National Ski Associations.

Contrary to the Formula One racing series, sports rights are not centralized in the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup but owned by the respective National Ski Associations. For instance, Ski Austria, formerly known as the OESV, implying that the OESV negotiates all broadcasting rights deals for all World Cup races held within its limitations (Austria's borders). An example is the deal that Ski Austria negotiated with the assistance of IMG Media in 2022: NBC acquired the rights to broadcast all Ski World Cup races in Austria for two-years on its TV channel and streaming platform (Willemsen, 2022).

Johan Eliasch, president of the FIS since 2021, wants to pursue a different strategic approach. The Swede considers centralization as an *“imperative [...] to realize everything that we want”* to make the FIS use their own content in any way they want. According to the FIS president, decentralization provides disadvantages only. However, National Ski Federations in countries where the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is relatively popular such as Austria, Germany and Switzerland, oppose this move. Eliasch, also CEO of the ski manufacturer Head, highlights the interdependence of sports and media as improved media rights management can generate higher revenue into the FIS which in a subsequent step creates higher prize money for the athletes (Willemsen, 2022) competing in the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Eventually, the FIS sold television rights for the World Cup to the Swiss company Infront in 2023. The agreement will be in effect from the 2026/2027 season onwards – but excludes the OESV (Schneemann, 2023).

2.7.3. FIS Alpine Ski World Cup: Sporting aspects

During the heavily COVID 19-impacted 2020/2021 winter season, 201.2 million skier visits were counted among the 68 countries where Alpine Skiing was possible. 40 percent of these skier visits took place in Alpine countries, a further 10 percent in Western Europe, 10 percent in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The share of the Americas was only 23 percent. More than 80 percent of all major ski resorts – defined by attendance exceeding 1 million skier visits per season – are located within these European subregions. 40 percent of all skiers globally are originally from Alpine countries and Western Europe, only 23 percent originate from the Americas. The importance of Alpine Skiing in Europe is further proven by the number of nominal participants in Alpine Skiing exceeding a third of the entire population in Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein whereas the United States are not even listed among the 20 countries with the highest nominal skiing participation rate (Vanat, 2022, p. 11ff).

Unsurprisingly, the origin of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is closely tied to Europe. During the only Alpine Ski World Championships that have been contested on the Southern Hemisphere as of today, in Portillo, Chile, in August 1966, the French Journalist Serge Lang, French trainer Honoré Bonnet, American Bob Beattie and the Austrian Sepp Sulzberger invented the idea of the World Cup. Supported by then-FIS president Marc Holder, the idea of the “founding fathers” of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup led to the first ever World Cup race held on January 5th, 1967, a Slalom in the village of Berchtesgaden, Germany. Races have been held in different disciplines since: *Downhill*, *Super G*, *Giant Slalom*, and *Slalom* (Oswald, 2017).

Downhill and Super G are known as the *speed disciplines*, Giant Slalom and Slalom are recognized as the *technical disciplines*. The speed disciplines only have one run whereas the technical disciplines consist of two runs, but only the thirty fastest athletes of the first run are allowed to start in the second run where the starting order is reversed. A combination of speed and technique is called *Combined*: The first run is a speed run and the second run a technical discipline. The times of both runs are added and whoever has the fastest overall time wins. Furthermore, even parallel races are conducted in an elimination mode with several rounds and comparatively rare team events are also held during nowadays FIS Alpine Ski World Cup seasons (www.swiss-ski.ch, retrieved: 01/14/2024). Most of these FIS Alpine Ski World Cup races are held in Europe, unquestionably the dominant market of Alpine Skiing.

FIS president Johan Eliasch is aware of these backgrounds and pushes for geographic expansion of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Viewed highly critically by many National Associations, Eliasch plans to turn the World Cup into a kind of “*Formula One of the winter*” and dreams of World Cup races in China as well as Saudi Arabia (Kraus, 2023). A summer series held in skiing halls is considered too. Eliasch’ vision is to lift the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup onto the same international stage as for instance the Formula One racing series. Uppermost, the FIS president aims at the expansion of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States and wants more Americans to become fans of the sport. His approach mainly focusses on holding more World Cup races in the country but has been criticized in environmental terms and because the Alpine Ski World Cup would spend more time away from its core markets in Central Europe (www.sport.orf.at retrieved: 01/14/2024). In any way, this undertaking might be difficult because of the ambivalent nature of Alpine Skiing in the United States.

2.7.4. Alpine Skiing in the United States: An ambivalent sport

Since the United States of America have the highest total amount of skier visits per season (www.statista.com, retrieved: 01/14/2024), an examination about increasing the number of active skiers would move away from the core of this master's thesis. Regardless, the ambivalent status of Alpine Skiing in the country needs to be delineated to provide a rather complete point of view of the sport's perception in the country.

Although the United States are the third-most populated country in the world with almost 340 million inhabitants as of 2024 (www.cia.gov, retrieved: 01/14/2024), the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup receives way less media attention than in other countries. Its popularity remains way below the country's most popular sports defined in section 2.5.3. although Alpine Skiing as a hobby sport is comparatively widespread. The United States are the largest matured Alpine Skiing market in the world and have the largest number of national skiers with around 25 million nominal "national skiers". However, less than 20 percent of all Alpine Skiing in the United States is proportioned to international visitors (Vanat, 2022, p. 24f) which implies that American skiers prefer to ski domestically. Skiers do not lack opportunities to ski: With more than 350 ski resorts that have more than 4 lifts and almost 3,000 lifts in total, the United States of America are ranked first respectively third globally. At first glance, these factors suggest that Alpine Skiing is not necessarily "limited" in the country.

Six of the 350 American ski resorts have more than one million skier visits per year, a statistic where the United States only trails Austria, France, and Italy. The portrayal of Alpine Skiing as a widespread sport in the country is further supported by the list of total skier visits per country on a 5-year-average. This ranking is also led by the United States of America.

In this regard, it needs to be highlighted that ski resorts in the United States follow a different business model than European country where a focus is laid on lift mechanics and sophisticated infrastructure (Vanat, 2022, p. 22ff). Alpine Skiing is a relatively costly endeavor where day passes can cost a fortune. Alpine Skiing pricing modalities have received little scientific attention, but the assessment of Hinterhuber, Haugom, Lien, Malasevska & Mydland (2020, p. 785ff) provides insights into the financial expenditures that prevent many Americans from skiing. American ski resorts generally try to increase loyalty through heavily discounted season passes (Blavatnik, 2021).

A skiing vacation in Aspen may set a family as far back as 25,000 US dollars. In Vail, a single day pass costs more than 200 dollars nowadays. In many resorts such as Sun Valley, Idaho, pricing has long de-coupled from inflation adjustment and may even be a significant factor why skiing remains less widespread in the U.S. per capita compared to Europe. For instance, the 1990 price of a day pass in the Sun Valley resort was 26 US dollars. If it had been adjusted for inflation annually, the price would have increased to 51.49 US dollars as of 2020. However, the actual price level more than doubled. Day passes were sold for around 133 US dollars in 2020. In addition to acquiring the already expensive right to go skiing, skiers need equipment too: In Sun Valley, renting equipment can easily cost up to 100 US dollars per person per day (Blavatnik, 2021).

Regardless of whether one goes Alpine Skiing or consumes the sport via media, an IPSOS survey conducted in January 2023 does not list Alpine skiing among the 13 most popular sports in the United States (Feldman, Mendez & Newall, 2023, p. 4). Thus, this survey agrees with the country's most popular sports that were outlined in section 2.5.3. Furthermore, these findings highlight how Alpine Skiing only plays a minor role in the sports market of the United States of America. A factor that may play into that situation is the description of Alpine Skiing as a “clustered” sport which also holds true for the United States. Alpine Skiing is geographically bound to certain parts of the country as illustrated by the below figure:

Figure 5: Geographical distribution of ski resorts in the contiguous United States



Source: Brent, 2022

Boucher et al. (2022, p. 1779) contradict the perception of Alpine Skiing as a widely liked leisure sport. With 305 medals in the history of Olympic Winter Games, the United States Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA) contributed the most of any National Governing Body to the total tally of the countries' Olympic achievements. Since Alpine Skiing was introduced to Olympic Games, the USA have won 10 percent of all available medals in Alpine Skiing and Snowboarding, but the number of active Americans that conduct winter sports has been shrinking since in the past 30 years. The number of Alpine Skiers in the country has seen a notable decline of 40 percent since the mid-1990s although the United States are home to internationally known Alpine Skiers such as Bode Miller or Lindsey Vonn. Nevertheless, Alpine Skiing will never be "that" sport as 2013 triple World Champion Ted Ligety fears. Regardless of the attention created through crossover stars like Miller and Vonn (Keating, 2021), professional Alpine Skiing remains a niche sport in the United States of America (Futterman, 2023; Keating, 2021). The perception of winter sports in the United States generally is described as a "microcosm" which is accentuated by Jessie Diggins and Mikaela Shiffrin, World Champions and Olympic Gold medalists in Cross-Country Skiing and Alpine Skiing respectively, who still receive little media attention, although that may be commercially promising: "*There is something motivating about operating as an underdog*" (Futterman, 2023).

Notwithstanding that it was a home race that subsequently brought a convenient starting time, only 686,000 viewers tuned in on average for the men's downhill race in Beaver Creek, Colorado in 2022 (Bruton, 2023). Moreover, the United States were not listed among the seven countries with the highest amount of event impressions, broadcast time, or total television audience during the 2021/2022 FIS Alpine Ski World Cup season. All major medial rankings about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup during the 2021/2022 were dominated by European television channels (Karduck & Kreile, 2022, p. 7ff). Sophie Goldschmidt, President of U.S. Ski and Snowboard, considers the Olympic Games as a possible commercial boost "turbo-charging" Alpine Skiing every four years. Since the World Cup is not a single event but a series of events that spans five months, winning the crystal globe for the most points in a single FIS Alpine Ski World Cup season may be more important than the Olympics. Consistent market coverage is the most promising way to unfold potential for professional Alpine Skiing in the United States. Goldschmidt even likens the World Cup to Tennis, Golf and Formula One because of its regular schedule, although viewers are mostly unaware of *minor* competitions (Bruton, 2023).

Nevertheless, Ted Ligety – an Olympic Gold medalist who won the Giant Slalom at the 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Turin, Italy – predicts that the American sports market will never favor or put Alpine Skiing equally with major sports leagues: “*A lot of people love skiing, but the expectations shouldn’t ever be to be the number one sport, it’s just a reality*”. Furthermore, Ligety thinks that “*you really need to have stars that show the fun of the sport to build the sport in the U.S.*” (Keating, 2021). This statement summarizes why this master’s thesis deals with the perception of professional Alpine Skiing in the United States.

In terms of the research questions, popularity is defined as the public recognition of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. This increased popularity can be measured in different ways: More people calling the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup among their favorite (passive) sports, higher TV ratings, a greater number of visitors of World Cup races in the United States of America, increased social media activity, or an improved public perception of either American and/or foreign professional Alpine Skiers competing in the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, notwithstanding whether at an event based in the United States or abroad. Hence, the empirical part of this master’s thesis aims to explore whether a streaming series can boost the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States, which factors influence the development of such a series, and how such a series needs to be designed.

3. Research Design and Methodology

Relating to the research subject presented in the introduction and the structure of this master's thesis, the application of quantitative research methods can be excluded. Quantitative research methods apply positivist perspectives in a causal model or approach an issue through a hypothesis to obtain scientific evidence in an objective and systematic way. On the contrary, qualitative research methods focus on building understanding of issues. Qualitative research is an appropriate way to explore issues that have rarely been investigated scientifically as is the case of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. Qualitative research operates in a hypothesis-generating way. Generally, qualitative research is characterized through the strive for generation of new theory that only applies to a limited number of learners (Sargeant & Sullivan, 2011, p. 449ff).

Regarding the research questions presented in the introduction, as the amount of people who are affected by the results of this section is comparatively small, the suitability of qualitative research is confirmed. Furthermore, the figure of people suited to provide information which allows answering the research questions is very modest too. Additionally, qualitative research methods aim to find out *how* and *why* something may or may not work which is in the sense of this research project. A qualitative research method is applied to answer the research questions presented herein since it is desired to find out whether a streaming series is appropriate to boost the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States. Obviously in that regard, the results generated within the next chapter also apply to a very narrowly defined target group: People engaged with marketing the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America.

3.1. Methodology

Interviews are commonly used for research projects for which they are the main empirical base and are applied if expert knowledge shall be imparted about the research field (Hopf, 2004, p. 203). Scientifically, qualitative interviews are defined as “*an exchange with an informal character, a conversation with a goal*” (Busetto, Gumbinger & Wick, 2020, 42466-020-00059-z). Froschauer and Lueger (2003, p. 44) supplement that problem-centered interviews are a fitting approach if a very specific, narrowly defined topic is investigated which holds true for this master's thesis. An important factor is to focus on a particular subject area without pre-determining this subject too strictly.

Froschauer and Lueger (2003, p. 55ff) also accentuate how problem-centered interviews give interviewees freedom considering their delineations, enable the recognition of individual patterns, and outline that guidelines are an appropriate tool to implement a problem-centered interview. The most important step in the preparation of an interview is to define whether questions shall be pre-formulated or not. *Relative* flexibility by the means of semi-structured interviews allows for the interviewer to have an orientation but provides freedom of movement on follow-up strategies, the formulation of questions, and sequencing. Although an interviewer may feel estranged because of intensive communication with strangers (Hopf, 2004, p. 204ff), semi-structured interviews are a suitable method since the structure of the conversation can be adjusted if for instance an interviewee is not able or unwilling to answer a question, or if concerns about the length of the interview arise. To enable this interview type, the pre-defined topics can be derived from literature review, previous research projects, or possible pre-liminary methods of data collection such as observations (Busetto et al., 2020, 42466-020-00059-z).

Problem-centered, guideline-supported, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the research method since this master's thesis' topic of research has barely been scientifically investigated. Targets were defined to discover how streaming in the professional sports marketing context is experienced, which factors are considered influential on the application of streaming for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, and how such a streaming series would need to be designed. To obtain as much information as possible, all questions used during the Interviews were pre-formulated which still enabled an individual structure of every conversation (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003, p. 15).

3.2. Interview guideline

An interview guideline shall consist of open questions that enable a semi-guided conversation to put subjective perceptions of the sample in the foreground (Bortz & Doering, 2006, p. 314ff). Guidelines shall take up the main topic area and be subdivided into core dimensions and relevant follow-up questions. Furthermore, guidelines not only serve as a memory support about the research topics but also enable the comparison of multiple interviews. They support an open conversation that also dives into areas not covered in the guideline itself. It is desirable to avoid the stringent implementation of the guideline, the "*guideline bureaucracy*", since discussed topics are forced this way. The individual interviewees' structuring is brought into the background (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003, p. 56f).

Allocated on this master's thesis, the Interview guidelines in German and English – provided in the Appendix – are divided into three blocks which are furthermore based on the research questions shown in section 1.1.: “Enhancement of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America through a streaming series”, “Factors influencing the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America”, and “Design of a streaming series to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America”. The respective introductory questions were pre-formulated and designed to lay the focus on the respective topic but still allow for an open conversation framework. Subsequently, the flow of the conversations was based on general exploratory questions whereby asking follow-up questions ran along the core topic. Topics which were not addressed by the interview partners were introduced through prepared ad-hoc-questions. Furthermore, to stimulate the interview partner's self-reflection, statements have been paraphrased back. This approach may include questions of understanding or confrontational questions if a corresponding level of trust is given (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003, p. 56f). Through this approach, commonalities and certain patterns shall be made visible.

At the beginning of an interview, every participant was asked to confirm the voluntariness of her or his participation. In addition, every participant had to give approval to her or his data being used anonymously for the purpose of this master's thesis. This consent was provided unanimously. If this declaration had been revoked during the interview by the participant, the according interview could have only been used until this point. In this case, a further interview would have had to be conducted to compensate the loss of research data. However, no interview partner revoked her or his declaration of data usage.

Moreover, all interview partners were presented the targets of the research project as well as the interview process and were also introduced into the specific sections. Afterwards, the actual interviews were commenced in accordance with the pre-elaborated interview guideline. During the interview, inquiries from the interviewee were possible at any time, but these injections should generally be limited to not lose the focus of the conversation. After all key questions were answered and the statements of the respondent fully completed, any interview partner was given time for further explanations, inquiries, topic-related impulses, or any possible questions towards the interviewer at the end of the conversation (Genau, 2020)

3.3. Sampling and transcription

Outlined by Mayer (2009, p. 39), the sampling process is based on pre-selection in accordance with the criteria presented herein. Interview partners are therefore selected based on pre-formulated conditions. A *conditio sine qua non* is that all possible interview partners must have or must have had professional experience with sports marketing and may work or have worked in sports associations, specialized marketing agencies, athlete and/or race marketing, sponsoring, sporting good providers or retailers, or may serve or have served in any other role associated with sports marketing. In this respect, the industry is limited. Thus, the basic population consists of any person professionally associated with sports marketing without any limitations being enacted considering nationality, gender, education level, or race. Additionally, the basic population is also not restricted regarding the sport marketed, although winter sports-related experts are obviously preferred.

Since it is desirable to avoid a geographical bias, the sample is not limited to Austria. No restrictions are applied in the sampling process for the companies or institutions interlocutors are employed at. Interviewees shall have at least four years of work experience in the sports marketing industry and need to have been involved with professional sports. During the selection of the Interview partners, an initial focus was laid on not representing any no age cohort respectively generation too frequently (Kowal et al., 2022, p. 265ff). Winter sports and skiing federations globally have been researched and subsequently approached via email. Moreover, many well-known sports marketing companies, specialized winter sports agencies as well as event hosts and sponsors associated with the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup were also contacted via email and have partially been reached out to via the digital networking platform LinkedIn as well.

The interviews lasted between 43 minutes and one hour and 34 minutes. All interviews were held in December 2023 and January 2024, the height of the 2023/2024 FIS Alpine Ski World Cup season which may be a reason for the comparatively low response rate. Out of 95 organizations contacted, less than 20 responded, and twelve interviews have been conducted in total of which one could not be recorded due to technical reasons. Thus, a memory log has been created which has subsequently been sent to Expert 13 for revision and further processing which has been returned in due course. In addition to these interviews, Expert 12 has been sent the Interview guideline and returned it with the questions answered in keywords.

Although the option for physically present interviews was offered if the respective interview partner was located geographically appropriate, all interviews were held digitally via MS Teams. Most interview partners are European: Of the 13 experts, 10 experts are from the German-speaking countries Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. One interviewee is from Norway, one is Italian, and only one American interview partner could be recruited. Interviews 5 and 7 were held in English, all other interviews were held in German. Thus, German statements are translated into English within the evaluation. The following Table 1 lists all participants whose expertise has been taken into consideration:

Table 1: Sample

Abbreviation	Nationality	Profession	Gender	Age
Expert 1	Switzerland	Marketing Manager FIS Alpine World Cup Event	M	33
Expert 2	Austria	Athlete's Press Official	M	46
Expert 3	Austria	Digital Content Producer, former sports journalist	M	36
Expert 4	Austria	Corporate Sports Sponsoring Manager	M	64
Expert 5	Norway	Event Organizer FIS Alpine World Cup Event	F	39
Expert 6	Switzerland	Corporate Sports Sponsoring Manager	M	49
Expert 7	United States of America	Marketing Manager Ski Manufacturer	M	64
Expert 8	Switzerland	Corporate Sports Sponsoring Manager	M	36

Expert 9	Germany	Press Official Skiing Association		58
Expert 10	Austria	Corporate Sports Sponsoring Manager	M	54
Expert 11	Switzerland	Sports Marketing Manager	M	45
Expert 12	Austria	Marketing Manager Alpine World Event	M FIS Ski Cup	47
Expert 13	Italy	Communications Officer Alpine World Event	M FIS Ski Cup	42

After an interview was completed, it was transcribed immediately (not applicable for Expert 12 and Expert 13). This process is described as “*the written record of what a participant or respondent said in response to a question [...]*” (Lewis, Saunders & Thornhill, 2019, p. 602), implying that interviews are written down. All transcriptions were carried out in accordance with the simplified transcription system of Dresing & Pehl (2018, p. 21f) that only mandates the notation of verbal communication, the smoothening of dialect expressions, and includes pauses longer than three seconds.

3.4. Analysis

In this master’s thesis, the data gathered through the interviews is analyzed by means of a qualitative content analysis according to Kuckartz. This evaluation method applies a combined form of deductive and inductive categorization. Before the data collection is commenced, the deductive main categories are derived based on the research questions and a literature review, respectively the theoretical part of this master’s thesis (Kuckartz & Raediker, 2022, p. 102ff).

To answer the first research question, data must be collected whether a streaming series is generally perceived to be an appropriate sports marketing tool at all and if any kind of sport has seen its popularity increase because of a streaming production.

This thesis deals with the enhancement of a niche sport in the United States of America, and sources cited herein allude that the popularity increase of a foreign racing series is indeed attributable to the relative success of a particular streaming series published on a renowned streaming platform. Thus, questions must be asked whether the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup can be boosted through a streaming series. Based on these backgrounds, the first main deductive category is formed: “Enhancement of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America through a streaming series”. In accordance with the second research question, data must be gathered to investigate factors that influence the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America, leading to the second main deductive category: “Factors influencing the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America”. As the third research question calls for content-related considerations, the third main deductive category is labeled “Design of a streaming series to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America”.

The chosen approach enables the direct formation of inductive subcategories based on the material, placing emphasis on deriving these subcategories directly from empirical data. It proves particularly suitable for addressing the research questions in this master's thesis as it distinctly prioritizes the inductive construction of categories grounded in empirical evidence rather than relying on theoretical frameworks. This is crucial, especially given that the individual application of streaming as a sports marketing tool cannot be classified into theory-related inductive categories but necessitates direct formation. The thesis adheres to the seven steps of content-structuring qualitative content analysis as outlined by Kuckartz (Kuckartz & Raediker, 2022, p. 129ff).

Firstly, the material gathered – the interview transcripts – must be edited in an organized way, making the transcripts “useable”. The actual initiating steps are conducted by carefully reading through the transcripts and highlighting passages relevant for answering the research questions, thus constructing the units of analysis. In the first coding process, all relevant text passages are assigned to the respective suitable main categories. As the coded text passages are organized into the three main categories, the inductive formation of subcategories directly on the empirical data takes place. Subsequently, the coded text passages are incorporated into the expanded categories. A visualization of the category system is elaborated (Kuckartz & Raediker, 2022, p. 129ff) in the following chapter as a basis for the subsequent discussion.

4. Results and Discussion

The category system shown below constitutes the foundation for the discussion and analysis of the results. Build on each other, the categories are subsequently elaborated through statements made by the interviewees. To improve readability and reduce possible redundancies, the category system created with MAXQDA has been modified, implying that the categories have been re-named and further simplified. The results are discussed and enriched with theoretical findings to scientifically frame the results.

Table 2: Category System

No.	Category	Definition	Example	Coded Units
				253
1	Enhancement of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America through a streaming series	Statements assigned to this deductive main category describe whether the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup could be made more popular in the United States by the means of streaming, and if and how streaming has already provided to the popularization of sports to discuss its case.	<i>“The television product Ski World Cup has not been changed for decades, and further marketing potential can be exploited through digitalization and social media”</i> (according to Expert 13, page 2)	29
1.1.	Marketing potential of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup	This inductive subcategory contains statements about how the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup bears significant marketing potential.	<i>“If you look at how diverse racing series or associations [...] F1, how it has positioned itself as a brand, skiing is far away from that”</i> (Expert 3, line 152)	8
1.2.	The preferred standing of television	This inductive subcategory contains statements about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup as a perceived television sport as well as the importance of television in the United States.	<i>“The sport is a classical, a classical TV sport, that needs to be seen this way”</i> (Expert 9, line 202)	10

2. Factors influencing the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America	Statements assigned to this deductive main category describe factors that may influence the favorability of a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America.	<i>“Yes, to be honest, the market is very crucial for snow sports and skiing, because it obviously has a lot of money and there is reach and sponsorship potential”</i> (Expert 8, line 166)	8
2.1. Conflicting marketing interests	This inductive subcategory contains statements about how diverging marketing interests of the FIS and National Associations may prevent the implementation of a streaming series.	<i>“This is about rights that various associations have secured and operate in a very ‘narrow-minded’ and idiosyncratic manner in their area.”</i> (according to Expert 12, page 3)	9
2.2. Foreign origin-impact on the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup	This inductive subcategory contains statements about which countries or regions are considered the home market for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup and why the foreign origin may negatively influence the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup’s popularity in the United States.	<i>“If we [...] take the purely historical factor of where the sport is at home then it is clearly Central Europe, the old countries. Germany, Austria, Italy, France, and Switzerland, which actually also have the know-how to organize the World Cup races to the standard that is required.”</i> (Expert 1, line 154)	12
2.3. Cultural factors influencing the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States	This inductive subcategory contains statements about cultural factors that influence the popularity of professional Alpine Skiing in the United States.	<i>“The accessibility to this sport, not everyone in this country can just say, tomorrow I’m going to skiing. Purely because of the destination ... and it’s also difficult in Austria, but in Austria I get in the car for 2 hours and can at least get to a ski lift somewhere”</i> (Expert 2, line 291).	68

Emphasis on traditional American sports	Statements on how American sports preferences influence the perceived status of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup as a niche sport in the United States.	<p><i>“The importance of the Ski World Cup for the USA is insanely low. Super local, hardly any national presence, Lindsey, or Mikaela (Annotation: Lindsay Vonn and Mikaela Shiffrin) have to do much more to get national attention than other sports in the USA. They have a very difficult standing.”</i></p> <p>(Expert 3, line 186)</p>	23
Demographic considerations	Statements on how demographic considerations influence Alpine Skiing favorability in the United States.	<p><i>“I think there is simply a lack of identification due to the many population groups in the USA”</i></p> <p>(Expert 3, line 387)</p>	5
Geographic and seasonal considerations	Statements on the geographic and seasonal limitation of Alpine Skiing in the United States.	<p><i>“So, you only have to once, I’ll say now in America or Canada gotten on the plane and have flown over several time zones to go from ski resort to the next.”</i></p> <p>(Expert 2, line 226)</p>	26
College and school sports	Statements on how college and school sports influence the perception of Alpine Skiing in the United States.	<p><i>“There’s probably costs associated with all junior sports now, Lacrosse ... But at the public school system, they support basketball, football, baseball.”</i></p> <p>(Expert 7, line 522)</p>	6
Olympic influence	Statements on the importance of the Olympic Games for American sports consumerism as Alpine Skiing athletes are often only known temporarily.	<p><i>“I think that they get if they perform in the Olympics the cover would be higher during the Olympics but the interest are not there on the World Cup because they cannot watch most of the World Cups on TV.”</i></p> <p>(Expert 5, line 249)</p>	8

2.4.	Financial demands and the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup	This inductive subcategory contains statements about how financial factors influence the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States.	<i>“It may deter people from going skiing themselves or attending an event, but the professional sport consumed by the media is not affected by this”</i> (according to Expert 13, page 5)	12
2.5.	Health aspects and target group expansion	This inductive subcategory contains statements about how health aspects can help expand the potential target audience of a streaming series in the United States.	<i>“What happens when you bring children across generations together around the topic of sport? It has a positive effect on character development itself and [...] when it comes to the issue of obesity for children.”</i> (Expert 9, line 382)	7
2.6.	Economic implications of the correlation of active and passive engagement	This inductive subcategory contains statements about how actively skiing and the popularity of professional Alpine Skiing correlate.	<i>“Professional skiing can be a ‘booster’ for active sports [...] if you have seen a race or documentary/series.”</i> (according to Expert 13, page 3)	14
3.	Design of a streaming series to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America	Statements assigned to this deductive main category describe how a streaming series about the FIS World Cup would need to be designed to boost its popularity in the United States.	<i>“I wouldn't retell a World Cup season [...] I would simply tell a story. And if the story consists of rivalries, self-doubt, arguments and, at the end of the day, the big win, then we have all the credence's together that are probably crucial”</i> (Expert 3, line 564)	23
3.1.	The American demand for entertainment	This inductive subcategory contains statements about how a streaming series should follow a rather entertainment-oriented approach.	<i>“American sport is entertainment oriented; I agree with that, they do a lot of things all around with halftime shows at the Super Bowl, all-around giants, blah blah blah.”</i> (Expert 6, line 390)	8

3.2.	Behind-the-scenes content	This inductive subcategory contains statements about how behind-the-scenes content is deemed more interesting in marketing terms than the actual sports conduct.	“ <i>And it's not just about the race itself, it's also about what does the preparation look like, how do athletes train, how they a race weekend, [...] what does the athlete do all year round.</i> ” (Expert 11, line 164)	15
3.3.	Heroism	This inductive subcategory contains statements about why Americans sporting heroes shall be included.	“ <i>From zero to hero [...] someone who already was at the top and fights his way back with an injury.</i> ” (Expert 1, line 318)	19
3.4.	Speed and technical disciplines	This inductive subcategory contains statements about whether the speed or the technical disciplines are more promising in marketing terms.	“ <i>Alpine sports, especially with the speed disciplines of course, has real potential for these action-packed and dramaturgy, dramaturgical scenes.</i> ” (Expert 8, line 132)	11

4.1. Enhancement of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America through a streaming series

During the Expert interviews, streaming emerged as a well-suited possibility to boost the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup because of the increased visibility streaming platforms provide. Among the Experts interviewed, there was agreement upon that the far reach of streaming not only influences the consumption of televised content generally but also has a profound impact on the consumption of sports; both live streaming and on demand-streaming are ways that provide commercial opportunities. Furthermore, the Netflix-Formula One series *Drive to Survive* was unanimously regarded as the prime example of boosting the popularity of a sport through a streaming series which confirms the suitability of streaming as a marketing tool.

Abou Aish, Kortam & Sedky (2022, p. 114) point out how an integrated sports marketing communication mix is a suitable way to attract fans towards lesser-popular sports but stop short of accentuating one form of media that may be especially beneficial. The authors define the term “*less popular*” as a liked sport, but not by many people.

Transferred to this master's thesis, this assessment holds true for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States. Contrary to the findings of Abou Aish et al. (2022, p. 113ff), the following statement narrows down the forms of televised contents that are needed to boost the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States: *"These cinematic documentaries [...] has the potential to appeal to people who have not people who haven't come into contact with these types of sport in a big way"* (Expert 6, line 197). As Humphreys & Ruseski (2009, p. 102) do not list Alpine Skiing among the country's most popular sports, new paths should be followed rather than relying on the conventional forms of sports media coverage if one aims at pursuing an integrated sports marketing strategy. Considering these backgrounds, the revelation of Expert 4 does not seem far-fetched that making the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup more popular in the United States requires out-of-the-box-thinking: *"So I do not have the tradition in the USA. That means I need to do something different [...] this could of course be such a streaming series"* (Expert 4, line 502).

This way, the need to adhere to American commercial considerations and marketing aspects is a given. The question whether streaming is commercially viable was approached too: *"Streaming can go into much more detail and put sponsors, partners, or athletes in the spotlight. This is often not the case with TV broadcasts"* (according to Expert 12, page 1). Thus, through expanded content opportunities, streaming has an edge over traditional television. It provides increased monetization potential because of the different subscription models which allow experimentation in the production of a streaming series. If this differentiation works for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, Expert 1 may be right that consumers are being moved from being one-time consumers to regularly consuming professional Alpine Skiing: *"If the viewer consumes skiing for more than just an hour on the weekend but rather watches it throughout the entire winter, then streaming certainly makes sense"* (Expert 1, line 135).

The interviews revealed that streaming has already been successfully implemented to increase the fandom of a particular sport. Professional Cycling, the MLS, the NFL, Golf, but foremost Formula One racing, namely the Netflix series *Drive to Survive*, were recalled as examples how streaming positively influenced the popularity of a single sport; in the case of Formula One racing even on a narrowly defined market: The United States of America.

Lindholm (2019, p. 100) accentuates how streaming platforms have lowered the entrance threshold for sports consumption, which is confirmed by Expert 3, although he adds an individual interpretation: *“So, of course, the internationalization of the entire streaming market has also made it bigger for us. And I think all the big streaming providers are doing a good job of exploiting sports documentaries anyway”* (Expert 3, line 616).

Through this statement, Expert 3 outlines that the streaming market has grown through the internationalization and has influenced the on demand-sports content market. On the one hand, this assessment implies that the internationalization of the streaming market can increase the awareness of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup outside its core market. This statement suggests that the growing streaming market and the emphasis on documentaries present opportunities for raising the visibility of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. As streaming providers find themselves in a highly competitive market, a streaming series needs to be well-thought and cleverly produced: *“I don't think something like this will work on a low budget, it would just have to be produced in the appropriate quality”* (Expert 10, line 214).

Expert 4 connects the success of *Drive to Survive* to the physical presence of the sport in the country: *“That is clear in Formula 1. There used to be times when there was no Formula 1 Grand Prix in the USA. And now, if I've counted correctly, we have four”* (Annotation: Three Formula One Grand Prix's were held in the USA in 2023) (Expert 4, line 139). Transferred to this master's thesis research objectives, this implies that a widely liked streaming series may see more World Cup races being held in the United States. Because of increased fandom, the sport may play a bigger role in the country and thus justify the increased presence of a foreign sports series. Furthermore, in accordance with Liu et al. (2022, p. 744), streaming allows for a new revenue stream and can increase fan engagement in different ways. Streaming platforms are ascribed a pivotal role since they have a very wide reach needed to expand the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States: *“I firmly assume that Formula 1, the management of Formula One, of this series, has agreed to the production of this series for reasons of visibility for their sponsors”* (Expert 2, line 90). Thus, Formula One seemingly had commercial potential before its advent in the United States. As the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is not among the United States' preferred sports (McGarry & Schwartz, 2014), the marketing potential of the sport in the country becomes even more apparent.

4.1.1. Marketing potential of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup

Among the Experts, there was agreement upon that the way how the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is currently being marketed has room for improvement. As the strategic marketing positioning of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is lagging other kinds of sports, the application of data-driven approaches was mentioned as a way of how to possibly get out of the misery. Furthermore, although not mentioned by the Experts in this regard, branding plays a pivotal role in sports marketing too. It supports the identification with a sport and helps to generate a fan base as well as further revenue (Barbu & Popescu, 2018, p. 35), The authors (2018, p. 36) further elaborate how a brand is related to identity and that a brand image is the way in which a sport is perceived, but certain strategies must be implemented to succeed. New technologies such as the integration of social media into branding need to be considered nowadays. However, this condition is currently not fulfilled by the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup that has only slightly changed in the course of time: *“Ski racing is almost like it was 30-40 years ago, in this racing scene. The stages have gotten a bit bigger, but at the core it is still produced in the same way”* (Expert 6, line 359).

These observations underline the marketing potential of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup and highlight how a different approach, in the sense of this master’s thesis a streaming series, may modernize the marketing of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup at large. By offering engaging and accessible content that resonates with contemporary preferences, the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup could become more popular in the United States. However, Expert 3 fears a resistance to change by the sports leading mediums: *“So you can probably still listen to Niki Hosp on ORF (Annotation: Oesterreichischer Rundfunk, the national public broadcaster in the Republic of Austria) in ten years’ time and the same sentences will still be spoken and it will still be the same interviews and still the same approach to a ski race”* (Expert 3, line 322).

As the word “same” is used repeatedly, the need for innovation in marketing the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is outlined. This statement supports the exploration of alternative forms of media such as streaming platforms to increase popularity in the United States. Streaming could disrupt the medial status quo of the sport. Given the fact that Americans pay for an average of 2.9 streaming services per month and that 99 percent of U.S. households are subscribed to at least one streaming service (Allen & Durrani, 2024), a streaming series constitutes an obvious solution to fulfill the marketing potential.

Expert 3 outlines how the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is trailing other professional sports and specifically recalls Formula One: *“If you look at how diverse racing series or associations [...] F1, how it has positioned itself as a brand, skiing is far away from that”* (Expert 3, line 152). Formula One too used to depend on television coverage before the acquisition of Liberty Media and only emerged after a strategic realignment (Delaine & Palermo, 2023, p. 14f) in the United States; thus, the role of television for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup and the United States generally also needs to be put into perspective.

4.1.2. The preferred standing of television

Television emerged as the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup’s prevailing form of media that has largely remained unchanged throughout the time of the sport being covered by the media. TV ratings are still considered the most important factor for financing a FIS Alpine Ski World Cup event, although not even the broadcasting television channels themselves changed. However, Expert 8 is convinced that the coverage has gone past its peak: *“I still believe that this state television very strongly focusses on the tried, the traditional, and accordingly the target group is also very outdated”* (Expert 8, line 121).

Not only does Expert 8 criticize television coverage, but his statement also outlines the need for innovation since he even considers the target group as “outdated”. This characterization highlights perceived limitations of traditional television coverage and implies that different forms of media such as streaming may move beyond the “the tried, the traditional”. Since the target group is “accordingly very outdated”, streaming can attract other target groups and may modernize the target group, but the question remains whether the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup can even move beyond television. Expert 9 shares his doubts: *“The sport is a classical, a classical TV sport, that needs to be seen this way”* (Expert 9, line 202).

On the contrary, Expert 3 thinks that a streaming series may be successful in the United States, and sees that streaming can poke European television outlets that dominate the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup: *“What I don't believe is that a series tailored for the American market is automatically unsuccessful in Europe, but the exact opposite could actually happen through the fact that it's a completely different perspective that we're simply not used to in Europe, because the same broadcasters have been doing the same thing in Europe for 40 years”* (Expert 3, line 712).

These statements highlight the challenges of disrupting established viewing habits and penetrate new markets such as the United States, although the latter statement highlights that streaming can move beyond the situation outlined in the previous section. Abbas et al. (2014, p. 160f) and Acosta (2002, p. 105) describe television as the most effective tool in marketing sports. Thus, moving the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup beyond the traditionally historic reliance on television to widespread its popularity may prove to be difficult. On the one hand, this conditions the need to analyze the target market very closely; on the other hand, this also conditions the need to still consider television when marketing the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States. Since the United States' sports television market is very fragmented and often rooted locally, this market needs to be very closely analyzed: *"We talk about 500 sport channels in the US. Not everybody has all channels. So, if you want to reach the correct market, first of all, you need ESPN or CBS or ABC to show it, and they need to show it throughout all States because ABC, CBS differ on what they broadcast on which regions in the US. So, if you choose CBS New York, you get one college game. If you choose CBS Dallas, you get a different college game"* (Expert 5, line 518).

Considering the establishment of a streaming series, this statement outlines that a streaming platform would be well advised to not completely forego traditional television about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States. Effective penetration of the American sports market requires collaboration with major national broadcasting networks such as ESPN, CBS, or ABC. Furthermore, this statement also highlights that the production and creation of content needs to be very well thought to accommodate regional differences. The assessment of television as a valuable contributor to the globalization of a sport that should not be left behind is supported by Beck & Bosshart (2003, p. 11) who describe that television supports, popularizes, and even *dominates* sports. In this regard, it does not surprise that Expert 6 is skeptical of whether major American television channels would give up popular sports for the benefit of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup: *"I think the classic channels Fox, NBC et cetera [...] they would rather show the 17th analysis of the last football game or the last baseball game because that gives them, because that gives them more viewers or more frequencies than if they were to show snow sports"* (Expert 6, line 525). This reflects the prioritization of American mainstream sports over niche sports and implies how difficult it is to establish the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the USA.

Unsurprisingly, these preferences do not only hold true for television but streaming platforms as well: *“I think it's Peacock and you can sort by sport, and you see, OK, like NFL, NBA, Major League Baseball, soccer, and then you get Golf and then you get down to a category called winter sports and you click on it [...] it kind of separates into the others, but it's down the list”* (Expert 7, line 429).

In conclusion, the findings are somewhat consistent with the general acknowledgment of streaming among the scientific community. For instance, Colbjørnsen & Spilker (2020, p. 1211ff) and Arbanas et al. (2022) highlight the influence of streaming with marketing sports. However, as this part of the evaluation reveals that the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup has significant marketing potential and needs to overcome the dominance of television, the first research question may be answered as follows: *A streaming series can affect the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States, although this may be a difficult endeavor.* Thus, factors that influence the development of such a streaming series are elaborated in the following subchapter.

4.2. Factors influencing the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America

In general, the current state of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup was perceived as ambivalent in the United States. Nevertheless, a prevailing opinion emerged that the American market has more potential for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup than the other way around: *“I think the value for the World Cup of the USA is greater than the other way around”* (Expert 3, line 194).

On the one hand, the above statement suggests that the United States are an important market for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup whose opinions and individual interests should be considered if one produces a streaming series. Expert 3 further outlines that staging events in the United States more regularly can benefit the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup commercially. On the other hand, the statement also indicates that the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is trailing other countries which implies that there is room for improvement of the popularity. Given the fact that Humphreys & Ruseski (2009, p. 94ff) estimate the economic value U.S. sports market-activities to be around 44 to 60 billion US dollars as of 2005, the significant potential the country bears in sports is proven. Thus, an increased popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup can lead to commercial improvements of the sport and increase fandom in the United States.

Any party involved in professional Alpine Skiing may benefit from an increased presence in the United States: *“I mean, if you are talking about 2-300 million people, if you only acquire 5% of them again, then of course it's a lot, so it's interesting; and snow sports are also very strongly supported by the manufacturers, and for them the American snow market is of course an exciting market in terms of sales”* (Expert 6, line 230).

Accordingly, even if only a fraction of Americans was “recruited” as fans, a significant expansion of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup could follow. The country obviously offers far-ranging opportunities that could be explored if a streaming series was implemented successfully. Nevertheless, it needs to be clarified whether the United States are a country where such a streaming series could be successful. In this regard perhaps unsurprising, Expert 4 is skeptical about the suitability of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup for the United States of America at large, but still acknowledges the popularity of snow sports in the country: *“Perhaps the model of Alpine Skiing as we know it in the USA [...] is not quite right. There used to be this professional series with the parallel races, they come from over there. We didn't know parallel races; they just took them over from there”* (Expert 4, line 382).

The statement from Expert 4 reveals both favorable and unfavorable factors for the success of a streaming series in the United States. On the one hand, the statement questions whether the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup could be popular at all in the United States. On the other hand, the statement also emphasizes the need for innovative approaches such as streaming. However, to initiate the implementation of such innovative marketing tools, all parties involved need to pull in the same direction.

4.2.1. Conflicting marketing interests

Several Experts see that current disagreements in-between the FIS and multiple National Skiing Associations such as the OESV or the DSV have led to a stalemate position. Thus, because of a lack of marketing unity, the creation of a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup cannot yet be initiated. Expert 3 argues as follows: *“I think the advantage [...] it would also be a big concern of the president to have this central marketing and all the strings in one hand to then be able to make such deals for precisely such series. The difference in skiing compared to such global series is that you don't have all the strings in your hand, and the national associations can partly organize themselves”* (Expert 3, line 131).

The above statement implies that a centralized marketing control or approach could streamline decision-making processes, particularly for complex tasks such as negotiating deals about a streaming series. Furthermore, this statement suggests that due to the nature of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup as a comparatively little, mostly European sport, it is naturally decentralized with a lot of autonomy given to National Associations. This not only presents a barrier to implement a holistic strategic marketing approach but, as outlined by Eisermann (2012, p. 7), may lead to severe conflicts because they follow different commercial or other targets. Expert 12 is very clear about who is to blame for this stalemate situation: *“This is about rights that various associations have secured and operate in a very ‘narrow-minded’ and idiosyncratic manner in their area”* (according to Expert 12, page 3).

“Narrow-minded” suggests that National Associations potentially actively hinder collaborative efforts to pursue a strategic marketing approach for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. This assessment is confirmed by Willemsen (2022) who describes that marketing deals initiated by the FIS under their new leadership do not fully entail the entire Ski World Cup as the OESV hesitates to give up control of *their* races. As the success of a streaming series not only depends on technical or audience-related factors but on organizational issues such as sports rights too, this may prove to be a hindering factor for the development of a streaming series. National Associations need to be brought onboard to avoid organizational challenges in the implementation of a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Some countries or associations have been named repeatedly during the interviews which suggests some Central European countries as the countries where the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup has its strongest standing. Thus, the foreign origin of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is elaborated in the following section.

4.2.2. Foreign origin-impact on the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup

During the interviews, the prevailing opinion of the Experts was that the Central European Alpine region is the home region of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, both historically and economically does this region dominate the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Going further, this definition was frequently narrowed down by most of the Experts who see Austria and Switzerland leading the way: *“With certainty, the home regions par excellence under quotation marks, the DACH region [...] certainly, Austria and Switzerland”* (Expert 2, line 206).

Transferred to the United States of America, the home market “per excellence” not being the domestic home market provides various challenges in the implementation of a streaming series. Firstly, this term suggests that Austria and Switzerland hold a special status in the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup that may overshadow other countries and diminish their visibility in the sport. The roots of the sport may marginalize historic contributions of other countries such as the United States. Muellner (2013, p. 659) states that one needs to go beyond empirical facts to define the popularity of Alpine Skiing in Austria. Notwithstanding the geographic restriction, the author (2013, p. 660ff) delineates both the cultural and economic importance Alpine Skiing has in Austria. Through having become widely popular among the Austrian population in the 20th century, Alpine Skiing does not only generate an opportunity to culturally attach to the country but also has an economic impact. Moreover, public support is indispensable for the success of the sport in Austria. Expert 8 confirms this assessment: *“In terms of marketing [...] very strongly influenced by the DACH region. I think there are really the decisive brands and then there are really complementary sponsors, depending on their nationality and geographical focus, but the big money flows are certainly in Switzerland and Austria because it is simply a national sport there”* (Expert 8, line 106).

The statement highlights a variety of factors that may be influential on why the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is comparatively unpopular in the United States. The penetration of Central Europe with important brands and sponsors, especially in Austria and Switzerland, influences decision-making. Alpine Skiing seems to be a national sport in these two countries, an assessment the Experts unanimously shared, it thus holds a special significance in culture and society at large. Unsurprisingly in this regard, Expert 6 questions whether the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is a truly global sport: *“The question of whether snow sports are really global sports, or whether it's a niche sport that de facto interests maybe 10-15 countries”* (Expert 6, line 156).

This status drives investments into marketing activities and contributes to the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup being a national pastime in Austria in Switzerland. In combination with Muellner findings who even labels Alpine Skiing a “culture-making machine” in Austria (2013, p. 660), cultural factors emerge as a major reason why the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is comparatively popular in Austria but remains under the radar in the United States of America. Subsequently, the influence of cultural factors will be elaborated in the following section.

4.2.3. Cultural factors influencing the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States

Over the course of the interviews, culture emerged to significantly influence the popularity of Alpine Skiing respectively FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. The Experts expressed that the country places an emphasis on its traditional sports while demographic factors also play a significant role. Geographic and seasonal limitations have also been raised. Moreover, the historical disadvantage of Alpine Skiing in the education system and because Alpine Skiing is considered an Olympic sport in the country were named as influential factors too.

4.2.3.1. Emphasis on traditional American sports

Among the Experts, there was agreement upon the status of professional Alpine Skiing as a niche sport in the United States. Professional American skiers need to work harder to be in the public spotlight than athletes in more *American* sports must work: *“The importance of the Ski World Cup for the USA is insanely low. Super local, hardly any national presence, Lindsey, or Mikaela (Annotation: Lindsey Vonn and Mikaela Shiffrin) have to do much more to get national attention than other sports in the USA. They have a very difficult standing”* (Expert 3, line 186).

This statement highlights how the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is perceived as a comparatively limited sport in the United States. In the country, the appeal of professional Alpine Skiing is primarily local and trails other sports. Thus, the difficulty of establishing the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup as a major sport – on which the Experts in general also agreed upon – among other sports is highlighted. This perception is also in line with the findings of Feldman, Mendez & Newall, (2023, p. 4) who do not even list the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup among the United States’ most popular 13 sports. NFL, Baseball, NCAAF, the NBA, and NCAAB are the most popular sport leagues among all groups and age cohorts. The following statement does not seem to surprise then: *“There are the big things [...] then there is Baseball, Football, Basketball, and then there's a bit of NHL and everything else is somewhere in the margins of the newspapers”* (Expert 6, line 512). More particularly, American Football “has a strong foothold with Americans of all ages” (Feldman, Mendez & Newall, 2023, p. 4). This description does not hold true for the – in comparison – almost invisible FIS Alpine Ski World Cup: *“That's like not in [...] their sports heritage is skiing [...] that's like a total niche sport”* (Expert 6, line 476).

According to this statement, Alpine Skiing appears to only appeal to a small and specialized audience within the United States. It suggests that the sport does not hold the same historical significance as other sports such as Baseball or Basketball do. Even a former Olympic winner and World Champion – namely Ted Ligety – shares the opinion that professional Alpine Skiing may never among the countries most liked sports (Keating, 2021). In this regard, Expert 7 considers the visibility of the sport, especially how the sport is marketed, as a decisive factor: *“You're competing against football, basketball ... it's harder to market it. Not the streaming video, but the actual racing itself”* (Expert 7, line 928).

Thus, the question arises why the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup struggles to be marketed in the country. Sophie Goldschmidt, President of U.S. Ski and Snowboard, suggests the key factor for increased popularity is that the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup secures consistent market coverage in the country. As a comparatively little 686,000 viewers watched the men's downhill in Beaver Creek, Colorado on average (Bruton, 2023), this condition does not seem to be fulfilled yet. A further factor is weighed in by Expert 10: *“The sports mentioned [...] are much lower threshold. Yes, shoving a football in the garden around, you can all do that. And swinging a baseball bat yourself”* (Expert 10, line 373).

This statement does not only suggest that other sports are more widespread because they are more widely practiced; in combination with the above statement by Expert 7 this statement also indirectly highlights how the comparatively little spread negatively influences the perception of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Thus, further cultural factors why other sports are preferred will also be investigated and be put into perspective with the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup.

4.2.3.2. Demographic considerations

Some Experts see that the demographic background influences the perception and acknowledgement of a sport. The Experts who considered demographic factors such as race or skin color expressed that certain demographic groups prefer some sports over others. Expert 10 recalls soccer and outlines how the move of one of the most internationally recognized soccer players even benefited the community at large: *“Simply through the fact that Messi now causes a sensation in Miami and that a large number of households are of course already Latino, you have a community for soccer, which is important”* (Expert 10, line 395).

This way, Expert 10 indirectly describes how demographic factors shape the popularity of a single sport. Cultural affinity and demographic composition play pivotal roles in increasing the popularity of a particular sport. Subsequently, promotional strategies shall be targeted at the demographic group that prefers Alpine Skiing. Thus, the active and passive consumers of Alpine Skiers in the United States need to be known when one creates a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Although Adair & Ritchie (2004, p. 89f) rather describe active skiers than possible streaming consumers, the authors provide demographic factors that should be considered in Alpine Skiing marketing. The authors list the age, the professional background, hobbies, the education level, gender, and the income level as decisive factors regarding Alpine Skiing consumerism in the United States of America. In the United States, the typical Alpine Skiing athlete is about 35 years old and serves on a Managerial Board or has another professional job. This person is predominately male, travels internationally regularly, and is comparatively likely to invest in real estate or buy wine. Students are Alpine Skiers rather than adults are. Moreover, Adair & Ritchie (2004, p. 89f) acknowledge “intrapersonal limitations” and that Alpine Skiing may be perceived “elitist”. Unsurprisingly, Expert 3 concludes as follows: “*Because I think there is simply a lack of identification due to the many population groups in the USA*” (Expert 3, line 387).

Subsequently, the United States’ demographic diversity may negatively contribute to establishing identification with the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Producing a streaming series would be a balancing act between addressing the demographic landscape of the country on the one side and tailored content for the narrowly defined Alpine Skiing target group on the other side. However, the geography of the country investigated and the seasonal limitations of Alpine Skiing pose even more influential factors that define the sport’s popularity in the United States of America.

4.2.3.3. Geographic and seasonal considerations

The geography of the United States and the subsequent limitation of possibilities to go Alpine Skiing was raised frequently during the interviews and interpreted rather negative since the accessibility to the sport subsequently suffers. Alpine Skiing is associated with higher costs than in the countries where the sport is comparatively widely popular such as Austria. Moreover, the mountains do not allow for year-round Alpine Skiing in the country; thus, the accessibility is seasonally limited, although the Experts approached this limitation rather as a marketing advantage than a negative factor.

Expert 10 highlights an American state that somewhat resembles the epicenter of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup: “*Colorado is quite comparable to Austria in terms of its proximity to the mountains*” (Expert 10, line 345). More specifically, this statement implies how regions with mountainous terrains such as Utah, Colorado, parts of California or Wyoming as well as some states on the East Coast may have a predisposition for Alpine Skiing because of *the mountains*. Transferred to a streaming series, this would even further narrow down the potential target group since regions that have similarities to the home market of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup may be approached way more easily than other parts of the country. However, this may prevent a capital influx into the sport since the commercial powerhouses are located away from these regions: “*There is tons of interest from the core group, but the core group is small and so are you, are you really reaching the people from San Francisco? That is where your population base is. If you wanted to have a lot of people show up and watch a ski race, and to me, like you want to have people show up and watch a ski race and then the TV becomes a secondary market*” (Expert 7, line 325).

As the above statement points out, a broader American audience is probably difficult to be reached. There may be a very distinctive target group in mountainous regions, but significant parts of the American population are almost entirely cut off from professional Alpine Skiing’s conduct. This way, the general perception of the Experts suggests that people seem to prefer sports they can familiarize around where they live. Accordingly, geography is a very influential factor that may lead to a higher rate in a certain sport’s participation if it is *supported* by underlying infrastructure, for instance ski resorts and lifts, as well as social structures such as family or safety. Thus, the fact that Alpine Skiing is geographically tied to certain clusters in the country adds to the circumstance that other sports are more popular in the United States than professional Alpine Skiing (McGarry & Schwartz, 2014). Subsequently, it is crucial that a streaming series not only approaches the core target group but also aims at expanding the fanbase towards the more populated parts of the country such as the West Coast. As the following section has shown, this happens to be a balancing act, even more that the sport is limited from a seasonal point of view. Unsurprisingly, Expert 4 raises how to maintain interest during the non-skiing season: “*For us, it is always great when people are wagging their tails, I have constant coverage, I have topics all the time. Our problem is, what do I do from mid-March to October?*” (Expert 4, line 590).

Accordingly, the coverage or seasonal gap between two FIS Alpine Ski World Cup seasons needs to be filled. In terms of this research project, this assessment suggests that the engagement with consumers is sustained in periods when television or live streaming coverage is not even possible. There are obviously enough things to be discussed or shown by the media; thus, it is important to keep the audience engaged during the off season. As delineated by Tasel (2020, p. 202ff), timing is crucial if a business seeks internationalization, regarding this master's thesis the popularization of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. It is essential to define the optimal timing if a new market or an enlarged customer base is courted (Tasel, 2020, p. 204). Expert 3 is in line with these backgrounds and spins his thoughts back to the prime application of the Netflix Effect: *"But then there is exactly the opposite cycle [...] And it is precisely in these series or just before a season, mostly now with Drive to Survive [...] The hype is triggered, and you find yourself in this hype early on and not with the first race for instance"* (Expert 3, line 112).

Apparently, the interest in sports follows a cyclical pattern which is highlighted through the anticipation generated by *Drive to Survive*. Subsequently, this pattern of interest needs to be considered to sustain interest and attract new viewers to the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States where other sports are seemingly more popular as outlined in section 4.2.3.1. One of the reasons for this situation may be the preferred standing of these sports in the American educational system.

4.2.3.4. College and school sports

On the one side, the availability of Alpine Skiing at the tertiary level and in schools was considered as negligible since the emphasis lays on traditional American sports. On the other side, the interviews highlighted that the education system is designed to create top athletes. Expert 6 puts together the status of Alpine Skiing and the sports that are preferred in the American education system: *"The American college and school system [...], there is skiing [...] non-existent, isn't it? There are [...] the big sports, Football, Basketball, Ice Hockey et cetera, maybe Golf, and skiing is like non-existent there ... That means they don't grow up with it at all and that's why it has like no relevance"* (Expert 6, line 468). In conclusion, the absence of Alpine Skiing from the country's educational framework outlines how Alpine Skiing lacks exposure and relevance among younger American target groups that are statistically more likely to consume streaming productions, and which are relevant for the implementation of a streaming series.

Garcia (2015, p. 121ff) finds a connection between the participation in school sports and the followership of the according professional sport. The author describes in her study that “love of the sport” (2015, p. 127) is a reason for how a particular sport is liked; thus, the participation in a certain sport can influence how this sport is publicly perceived. As Alpine Skiing is rarely possible in American Colleges and High Schools, the opportunities to experience this “love of the sport” are naturally limited as there is *one* school located in a comparatively conveniently location: “*There are very strategic training programs, schools, [...] a school system that also takes care of this to promote top athletes. Just as we have a special focus school there, it is in Vail in Colorado. And ... Mikaela Shiffrin and Bode (Annotation: Bode Miller), both come from this same school*” (Expert 2, line 261).

On the one side, compared to the epicenter of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, this sport has a disadvantage since children often join a local ski racing club at the age of three to four in Austria. This is, at least partly, contributable to the apparent presence of the OESV among local ski clubs and schools that focus on ski racing (Hildebrandt, Mueller & Raschner, 2015, p. 65). Nevertheless, on the other side, as the Expert specifically highlights two Americans, a streaming series could benefit from showcasing the pathway from the specialized training programs to professional athletic success of Mikaela Shiffrin and Bode Miller. Moreover, this statement indicates that the American education system generally specializes in creating elite athletes, thus possibly creating further top professional skiers who could subsequently be showcased. However, in many sports, the athletic success American Alpine Skiers is only widely publicly acknowledged every four years.

4.2.3.5. Olympic influence

Unanimously, the Experts agreed that the United States think of the Olympic Games as the single most important sporting event. Success at the Olympics can be a game changer for athletes. Additionally, the Experts also pointed out that professional Alpine Skiing is widely perceived as an Olympic sport rather than a European, FIS-sanctioned sport in the United States. Nevertheless, the question remains why the popularity is not enduring although the Olympics are comparatively popular. In this regard, Expert 5 recalls the important role of the media: “*I think that they get, if they perform in the Olympics, the cover would be higher during the Olympics but the interest are not there on the World Cup because they cannot watch most of the world cups on TV*” (Expert 5, line 249).

This statement delineates the importance of continuous media coverage to boost the visibility of Alpine Skiing. On the one hand, the need for coverage of the regularly scheduled FIS Alpine Ski World Cup events is highlighted; on the other hand, the need to increase accessibility may also be fulfilled through a streaming production since the sport seems to be intangible outside the Olympic Games. Content-wise, a streaming series may showcase the preparations and training of an American or foreign athlete for an Olympic competition. The Olympic Games cannot be left unmentioned: *“The perception in America is different. The Olympics are ... As far as Skiing goes, far above the World Cup”* (Expert 9, line 658). As Dyreson (2013, p. 3) outlines, no single sports event garners more media attention than the Olympic Games, underlining how important the event is for the popularity of a sport in the United States. The following statement confirms this assessment: *“And really, you know, it comes down to the Olympics, right? Where that's where you get the millions of people that watch in the United States because it streams into your household every night on prime-time TV. And those kids, when Mikaela Shiffrin wins a gold medal or Bode (Annotation: Bode Miller), you know, they become stars, Ted Ligety, so Picabo (Annotation: Picabo Street)”* (Expert 7, line 274).

In conclusion, the Olympic Games influence the coverage about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, notwithstanding whether the event is taking place *that* year. Major tournaments or events – from an American perspective – as other sports suggest too, are important triggers for the popularity of a sport. Thus, leveraging the exposure from such events can positively influence the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. One option of this complementation is of course a streaming series. Nevertheless, this endeavor demands financial resources, and Alpine Skiing happens to be a comparatively costly sport in the United States.

4.2.4. Financial demands and the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup

Alpine Skiing was described as a costly endeavor in the United States. On the one hand, the Experts described how Alpine Skiing may even be considered elitist and can only be afforded by a fraction of the American population. However, on the other hand, the degree to which financial demands influence the popularity of professional Alpine Skiing was perceived differently. Expert 13 highlights this ambivalence: *“It may deter people from going skiing themselves or attending an event, but the professional sport consumed by the media is not affected by this”* (according to Expert 13, page 5).

This statement suggests that a streaming series may help broaden the appeal of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup since it may attract viewers through media consumption, consequently raising awareness. People may not go skiing themselves due to financial reasons; however, a streaming series may still raise the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup indirectly as it complements traditional forms of professional sports engagement such as attending an event. Although Hyman (2012, p. 3) interjects that parents rather save money on other things than their children's sport, Blavatnik (2021) indirectly confirms this assessment as many middle class or lower income families are no longer able to afford to go Alpine Skiing but still describes that Alpine Skiing has a certain standing in the country. Thus, from a marketing point of view, the need to approach consumers medially in some way is highlighted, but one needs to investigate whether the high cost of practicing the sport itself deters people from consuming its professional derivation. Expert 11 raises: *“Many people who don't have the money never even come into contact with skiing by definition because they don't do it themselves [...] I also believe that it's actually precisely these people are the exciting people to build up this phantom or whatever you want to call it [...] to really spread the sport”* (Expert 11, line 394).

Through this statement, the interpretation in the above paragraph is confirmed, and how the financially less fortunate may be the foundation that carries the establishment of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is outlined. A streaming series can raise awareness of professional Alpine Skiing, notwithstanding the financial demands practicing the sport bears. Thus, the financial perception of the sport may even provide a marketing chance rather than a risk as Expert 6 spins streaming back to Formula One, a highly expensive professional sport: *“I would say that does not have any influence. I mean, Formula One is expensive too and I still watch it”* (Expert 6, line 309). A streaming series may fill the gap in-between the actively skiing demographics who are interested in Alpine Skiing anyway, at least in the active sport, and those who have not been exposed to the sport yet, possibly due to their health-related consumer behavior.

4.2.5. Health aspects and target group expansion

Over the course of the interviews, some Experts only slightly accentuated how showcasing sports can influence the levels of physical activity, but also highlighted how the rather “unhealthy” living Americans can constitute an important target group.

It is commonly known that the United States do not have the best reputation considering health aspects such as obesity or regular movement, Temple (2022, p. 4254) describes that lifestyle choices such as regular movement and especially healthy nutrition influence how healthy one's body remains. Interestingly, these rather stay-homes – in an athletic sense – are described as follows: *“All around [...] probably these are exactly the people who are most likely to sit in front of the TV at home or sit in front of their laptop and stream [...] probably a lot more of these people than those who are really active and say, hey, I'd rather go out myself than watch someone else go out there drive down”* (Expert 8, line 333).

The statement implies that there is a significant fraction of the American population that does not do sport but still consumes sports passively. Outlined in section 2.3.1., streaming is widespread in the United States, obviously both among rather athletic and unhealthy living Americans. Consequently, a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup could tap into the target group of the rather “unhealthy” sports consumers that prefer to consume sports: *“I would not say that someone who likes to eat burgers and fries could not still be a fan”* (Expert 2, line 366).

Insofar, lifestyle choices or dietary preferences do not necessarily preclude someone from watching a streaming series which could subsequently attract an extended range of audiences. On the contrary, a streaming series may even boost healthy living. Gonzalez, Marfil, Puertas and Zuerta (2019, 16030486) describe how the media has grown into an important force that can promote the importance of physical activity among a wider audience, although it almost dictates a certain perception. The authors outline which prominent role emotional factors play and how the sports media, through whichever way of transmission, can influence the behavior of society. As the authors also delineate how the exposure to sports images can increase the motivation to improve health-related habits such as performing physical exercise or consuming a balanced diet, the following consideration does not surprise any further: *“Sport is more of a positive factor: You can use the topic of exercise to communicate the importance of healthy living to the population”* (according to Expert 13, page 4). Subsequently, a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup may even serve as a health catalysator. In marketing considerations, health aspects can be deemed a favorable factor based on this analysis. As active and passive sports seem to correlate, the following section analyzes how active and passive Alpine Skiing may be aligned together through a streaming series.

4.2.6. Economic implications of the correlation of active and passive engagement

During the interviews, a prevailing opinion emerged that actively skiing and passively consuming the sport correlate in the United States. Nevertheless, the Experts were unsure about the origin of that correlation and how that affects marketing considerations. A certain ambivalence is highlighted through the following statement: *“I’m a good ski racer on the Streif because I ride the Streif on the Play Station well, that alone doesn’t increase the popularity of skiing”* (Expert 2, line 168).

The above statement describes that *actual* Alpine Skiing participation and non-physical engagement in the sport need to be distinguished. This separation is important since a streaming series shall push the passive consumption of the professional derivation and not the active engagement in the sense of this master’s thesis. Thus, light needs to be shed on the passive engagement with Alpine Skiing although that may not directly cause more Americans to go Alpine Skiing. Drengner (2014, p. 8) states that the passive consumption of sports is generally rooted in the interest of consumers in the active participation of others and thus confirms this assessment. Expert 13 transfers this issue to televised productions: *“Professional skiing can be kind of a ‘booster’ for active sports; at some point you start to get more involved with it once you have seen a race or a documentary/series”* (according to Expert 13, page 3). This way, the Experts asserts that if one has seen any kind of medial production about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, one may be more aligned to it. A streaming series can very well be such a production.

In economic terms, more Americans skiing means they spend money in ski resorts which induces further economic effects. Major investments into American Alpine Skiing infrastructure may depend on that: *“If I invest millions to open up snow sports in America, but in the end, nobody goes skiing because it’s too expensive [...] that could have an impact on the strategies”* (Expert 6, line 605). Accordingly, a streaming series that showcases professional Alpine Skiing may stimulate interest and, subsequently, also the physical engagement in Alpine Skiing and even create further economic potential through equipment purchases or ticket sales. Consuming the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup through a documentary or a series, or even watching the live sport event, may inspire more Americans to try out the sport itself. Expert 9 supports this interpretation and highlights a certain psychological component: *“In this context, I believe that competitive sports are extremely important because it showcases what people are capable of and, of course, also encourages them to imitate it”* (Expert 9, line 387).

In conclusion, the correlation between active and passive Alpine Skiing serves as a favorable factor since it emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between them. More specifically, it directs the focus towards marketing the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup rather than active Alpine Skiing, providing a structured marketing approach.

However, Alpine Skiing, even more the European FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, is a niche sport in the United States. Within the country, Alpine Skiing is geographically tied to certain regions and generally perceived as an expensive sport. Furthermore, other sports such as American Football or Basketball have a historically superior standing. Alpine Skiing is widely considered an Olympic sport in the country. In marketing terms, health aspects can provide a commercial boost, and the correlation of active and passive sports is of importance. The seasonality of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup can be used as a boost; and if demographics are analyzed narrowed down, a streaming series may serve towards the increase of FIS Alpine Ski World Cup fandom in the United States of America. Nevertheless, such a streaming series only succeeds if it is well prepared and if its contents are deemed consumable by the audience.

4.3. Design of a streaming series to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America

Over the course of the interviews, the Experts argued relatively similarly about the design of a streaming series to boost the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. Personal connections, a look behind the scenes through rivalries through action, and the showcasing of the sports' physique were deemed essential. Since the appreciation of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is comparatively low in the country, educational work and outside-the-box approaches generally would need to be considered as should the United States at large: *"I think it would not be entirely wrong to make some kind of reference to America"* (Expert 6, line 753).

Therefore, a connection or a reference to the United States should always be incorporated into a streaming series. As the United States of America frequently showcase their patriotism in sports (Dyreson, 2013, p. 2), a streaming series needs to be tailored around the preferences of the American audience. American consumers have unique characteristics: *"The American consumer, who mixes the genres much more than we do. I think that for him documentaries are not 100 percent important in a documentary"* (Expert 9, line 718).

In this sense, the American audience not only tends to mix genres but also seemingly prefers other forms of contents over documentaries. This statement also highlights that American consumers prefer a diversified content experience. Producers of a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup should therefore aim at specifically tailoring their productions around the preferences of the courted audience. Moreover, the statement of Expert 9 aligns to Mittell (2004, p. vii) since the consumption of televised content in the postmodern era is marked by genre hybridity, thus the mixing of genres as outlined by the Expert. The author (2004, p. 16) also points out that that certain formats are more suited to entertain the audience than others. Purely categorizing a production into a certain genre is outdated as Expert 8 confirms the need to *bridge*: “*Because tradition is lacking, you need to include innovation elements, you need to look go close the gap*” (Expert 8, line 555).

Due to the perceived lack of established Alpine Skiing traditions, the above statement implies that innovative media formats such as a streaming series may enhance the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. An audience may be approached through other ways than the conventional forms of media. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of content creation and the need to adapt to changing consumer preferences is highlighted. As the country seemingly lacks tradition, a streaming series would also need to include educational elements: “*If the [...] basis is not the same, then it needs more [...] introduction to the topic*” (Expert 1, line 329). However, the question remains which format is best equipped to introduce the American audience into the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. Expert 6 suggests as follows: “*Exactly these cinematic documentaries [...] has the potential to appeal to people who have not come into contact with these types of sport*” (Expert 6, line 197).

Therefore, a streaming series needs to visually captivate the audience through its design. Such a production may on the one hand include the characteristics of a documentary such as having a narrator and on the other hand be designed as a movie that can be watched in movie theaters, approaching consumers on an emotional level with a way of design they are used to. This approach may increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States if the story is well-written and comprehensible, easily understandable chapters are logically built on each other. If consumers are addressed directly, this pathway can be successful: “*For a streaming product [...] it is the easiest to work with personal connections*” (Expert 1, line 329).

Consequently, emotional connections are pivotal in captivating American audiences with the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. As suggested by Izard (1977, p. 2), people naturally prefer content that directly resonates with their emotions. Moreover, with streaming platforms offering personalized viewing experiences and serving as facilitators for social bonding (Conradie, Evens & Henderickx, 2023, p. 5), the importance of emotional engagement in capturing the interest of American audiences in the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is highlighted. Expert 1 supports this assessment: *“I think emotions will be the most important”* (Expert 1, line 375). Nevertheless, the question remains how emotions can be addressed effectively needs to be answered too.

In this regard, most of the Experts provided similar answers and expressed a preference for drama and rivalries. Moving away from the actual sports conduct was by most of the Experts considered essential to be successful in the United States. Expert 3 outlines this pathway: *“I wouldn't retell a World Cup season [...] I would simply tell a story. And if the story consists of rivalries, self-doubt, arguments and, at the end of the day, the big win, then we have all the credence's together that are probably crucial”* (Expert 3, line 564). Telling stories through a narrative structure that evokes emotions seems to be a promising way of creating a storyline for the American audience. As Mueller and Sutherland (2010, p. 20) describe how Americans interested in sports can easily relate to the storyboard of the good versus the bad, heroes versus villains, and thus support the delineation of Expert 3, such an element should be included in a streaming series too. Additionally, Expert 5 suggests including sport-specific conditions that fit the American audience: *“You need to be able to showcase how steep it is on the slopes, the race, how icy it is, how dangerous it is on downhill [...] Americans like the crazy. Extreme sport is interesting for them”* (Expert 5, line 423).

The above statement provides further recommendations about the design of a streaming series, it outlines how the intensity of professional Alpine Skiing and the inherent danger of the sport may be of interest for American consumers. Moreover, the terms “the crazy” and “extreme sport” hint towards the incorporation of entertainment elements and the showcasing of behind-the-scenes content. Since these factors as well as heroism and the distinction between speed and technique disciplines have been raised frequently during the interviews, they are analyzed more thoroughly in the upcoming sections.

4.3.1. The American demand for entertainment

Over the course of the interviews, the Experts acknowledged that professional sports are closely connected to entertainment in the United States, contrary to how sports are often publicly perceived and commercially approached in Europe. Sports are not always about sports only: *“American sports are entertainment-oriented [...] they do a lot of stuff around with some halftime shows at the Super Bowl, all around huge blah blah blah”* (Expert 6, line 390).

For the design of a streaming series, the above statement outlines that the American sports culture generally is entertainment oriented. Since there is “a lot of stuff around” and “huge blah blah blah”, the need to capture the attention of the American audience through entertaining content rather than the actual sports conduct only is highlighted. Furthermore, as the Super Bowl halftime show is mentioned, this statement suggests that a streaming series should include spectacle and drama too. In the United States of America, sport events are associated with grandeur that, in some way, would have to be showcased in a streaming series too. Burcea et al. (2020, p. 14ff) see that “commercial dynamics [...] help the sports entertainment market to attract the group of consumers of sports fans” (Burcea et al., 2020, p. 14ff). As the National Museum of American History (2022) even describes the United States of America as an “entertainment nation” where the fan relationship with sports is a “highly emotional experience” (2022, p. 11), thus closing the gap to the previous section, such a “commercial dynamic” can very well be brought to life through entertainment.

Burcea et al. (2020, p. 14ff) describe the importance of sport events in the perception of sport as entertainment in the United States. Expert 12 expressed his thoughts on events as follows: *“Here, events need to be developed to create an experience in addition to the alpine races. For instance, the Winter X-Games are very good here and inspire tens of thousands of people year after year with their shows”* (according to Expert 12, page 2). Thus, for a streaming series, inspirations may be drawn from the X-Games since this event is obviously considered a successful event in the way it is presented, how it showcases spectacles, and captivates its spectators. Moreover, this statement implies that such a production should not focus on showcasing FIS Alpine Ski World Cup races only but should also include other elements that enhance the overall viewing experience. A possible element was raised frequently during the interviews and is considered in the following section: Behind-the-scenes-contents.

4.3.2. Behind-the-scenes-content

Showcasing procedures beyond the actual sporting conduct emerged to be of great significance for the design of a streaming series. The Experts argued that showing how athletes or events are made provides valuable catches to garner the audience. Thus, the Experts are in line with Beck and Bosshart (2003, p. 11), who outline that *“athletes and sport managers are ready to accept interference”*. Moreover, the inclusion of showcasing private lives is a commercial boost (Beck & Bosshart, 2003, p. 12) as Expert 9 outlines too: *“Trying to show an international picture of the sport, with the protagonists being portrayed as human beings, with all their reasons for loving this sport, for practicing it. I would show the team behind the team, would show the technology, would include all the aspects that play a role in this sport, there are a hell of a lot of them”* (Expert 9, line 589).

Content-wise, this statement highlights that the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup shall be portrayed with an international rather a regional European appeal to broaden its appeal towards consumers in the United States of America. Moreover, athletes shall be portrayed in a humanized way to create emotional connections with the audience which, as has previously been described herein, seems to be essential for viewer engagement. This statement explicitly mentions “behind-the-scenes” and thus, also through progressing into the “team behind the team” as well as “all the aspects that play a role”, showcase authenticity. Nevertheless, the privacy of the athletes still needs to be considered; thus, a *fully* complete picture of an athlete can obviously not be transported: *“As far as you get them [...] when we shoot something in the summer and so on, yes, that's all good, but certain areas are taboo”* (Expert 4, line 648).

Consequently, the limits of coverage need to be understood and closely observed. This statement also implies that there should be careful considerations what to include in a streaming series and that crossing into an athlete’s privacy may have consequences, both commercially and possibly even legally. However, to further illustrate the behind-the-scenes conduct, one may approach the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup from a different perspective: *“You can also broadcast different places, like Kitzbuehel or Birds of Prey* (Annotation: Kitzbuehel is an internationally renowned ski resort in Tyrol, Austria; the Men’s Downhill course in Beaver Creek, Colorado is called Birds of Prey) *or whatever, you can produce a documentary or a background story”* (Expert 1, line 305). This way proposes further captivating content ideas.

Featuring specific locations that have a certain value for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup may be able to further increase authenticity. On the one hand, including ski resorts or courses raise the respective location's profile; on the other hand, highlighting an American may even further *Americanize* a streaming series' U.S.-profile and thus foster a deeper appreciation for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States. Moreover, the exploration of behind-the-scenes dynamics with athletes being in the forefront sets the stage for the way how athletes are portrayed in the United States.

4.3.3. Heroism

The American preference for heroism, even more in sports, was accentuated frequently by the Experts. Moreover, a prevailing opinion emerged that if these heroes are from the United States, American audiences can even be better approached. Bode Miller, Lindsey Vonn and especially Mikaela Shiffrin were recalled in this regard. In general, Americans admire their heroes: *"I think this hero factor, yes, that is necessary. And if that one is domestic, all the better"* (Expert 4, line 775).

Not only does this statement confirm the general direction the Experts hinted towards, but it also enhances that Americans need to be emotionally connected to the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup which underlines how important national pride is in American sports considerations. Scientifically, this assessment is confirmed by Jay (2004, p. 4) who describes that sports teaches the most important aspects about American citizenship, especially considering integrity, reliability, and a sense of responsibility. Subsequently, athletes are treated as national heroes in the United States. Since interest in human beings themselves sells as well (Beck & Bosshart, 2003, p. 12), it does not surprise that Expert 3 suggests to build a streaming series around popular athletes rather than around the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup itself: *"So, I think that would be my approach, not to make a series about skiing but a series about Mikaela (Annotation: Mikaela Shiffrin), where skiing plays a role"* (Expert 3, line 478). For the design of a streaming series, this statement implies that the narrative should be centered around an athlete that can potentially attract broader audiences and is known beyond sports. It appears that American consumers connect more deeply with individuals and their respective journeys rather than with a particular league or sports series. In this regard, Expert 10 recalls an Austrian: *"The Herminator (Annotation: Austrian skier Hermann Maier) was really a thing there for a short time"* (Expert 10, line 520).

Nevertheless, the question why Hermann Maier became hugely popular in the United States can only be answered if the following statement is thought of: *“From zero to hero [...] someone who already was at the top and fights his way back with an injury.”* (Expert 1, line 318). Thus, the 1998 Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan, need to be recalled. During this event, Maier won two gold medals after the “fall of the century” in the men’s downhill where he flew for around 30 meters before smashing several safety fences upside down (www.derstandard.at, retrieved: 05/05/2024). Subsequently, this assessment delineates that American audiences prefers narratives of resilience, determination, and triumph over adversity. Through focusing on such individuals that overcome challenges, a streaming series may prosper, especially considering the following statement: *“The American consumer [...] will hardly be able enthusiastic about watching a ski race over 2 hours”* (according to Expert 13, page 6). This statement reiterates the potential of a streaming production that focuses on the issues delineated within this subchapter. Consumers may be discouraged if they are presented a longer-form content solely about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup’s sporting conduct. However, as the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup’s two categories, namely speed and technical disciplines, have both been raised during the interviews, these categories are analyzed in the concluding section of Chapter 4.

4.3.4. Speed and technical disciplines

In marketing considerations, the Experts almost unanimously solely considered the speed disciplines Downhill and Super G to be more promising for the American market. Excitement about jumps, the high speeds, the history of downhill slopes, and drama were named as reasons for this preference. The Expert’s assessment is scientifically supported by Coleman (2004, p. 6) who outlines that Americans have a “thrill of speed” (Coleman, 2004, p. 6). Thus, a streaming series would need to put these faster disciplines in the foreground: *“Alpine sports, especially with the speed disciplines, has real potential there for these action-packed and [...] dramaturgical scenes”* (Expert 8, line 132).

Accordingly, if the focus is laid on the speed disciplines, the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup does seem to have potential in the United States. Incorporating speeds and dramaturgical scenes such as falls, crashes, or injury during a speed race, may create an *American* viewing experience. This complies with Burcea et al. (2020, p. 14) who describe that sports are about *“drama, suspense, passion”*.

Moreover, this speed-only approach would shape the American experience of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup very favorably towards the speed disciplines Downhill and Super G. Since the media has a strong influence on shaping human experience (Hill, 2018, p. 10), it still needs to be carefully considered whether to approach the technical disciplines in a streaming series at all. However, there may be challenges incorporating the Giant Slalom and the Slalom: *“I really think that to try to tell it completely detached from the disciplines. If you had to put it in terms of disciplines, I would probably still come across the speed disciplines. That's in a streaming series ... Quite simply because you can tell other things, in a slalom that's difficult in two sentences ... If I now imagine that I must sell that to a US consumer on a screen via push notifications ... What do I tell in a Slalom?”* (Expert 3, line 535).

In some way contrary to Expert 8, this statement suggests that engaging American audiences with the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup happens to be a difficult endeavor. Although Expert 3 is in line with the prevailing opinion that focusing on the speed disciplines is more promising, he points out that it is most important to focus on the actual storyline and the narrative pathway that captures American audiences and keep them bound, even if that may be completely detached from the disciplines. This way, he subtly outlines that a streaming series needs to be attached to American preferences in any way to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America.

In conclusion, as the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup lacks tradition in the United States of America, a streaming series may be a way to leave behind this status, but it needs to showcase personal connections and appeal emotionally. Moreover, an American connection shall be included, and heroism be depicted as well, even better if domestic. Because of its status as a niche sport in the United States, some educational aspects about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup would need to be included too. As American consumers mix genres, the need for rivalries and behind-the-scenes content is highlighted. Additionally, the American sports market asks for action as it requests the combination of sports and entertainment, although the latter may prevail. Through the speed disciplines rather than the technical disciplines, drama and heroism may be brought to life best.

5. Implications and outlook

Within this chapter, the limitations of this master's thesis are shown. Theoretical implications and further research perspective are also outlined. Furthermore, this chapter's last section closes this master's thesis by providing strategic perspectives and practical implications.

5.1. Limitations

The sources cited allow for a profound description of the Netflix Effect; however, the description of this effect lacks a scientific foundation per se. Since it is a relatively recent phenomenon that has arisen through the advent of media streaming, it has barely been investigated scientifically yet. Thus, this thesis is partially built upon non-scientific literature and aims to derive theoretical descriptions based on newspaper or magazine articles. Furthermore, scientific literature about both Formula One and the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is not as widely available as literature is about other sports. Considering the latter, the existing literature not exactly dictates, but in some way still pre-sets a certain delineation pattern. Most obviously, this pattern is visible through the mixture of active and passive Alpine Skiing. Although the evaluation part shows a correlation in-between active and passive sports in Alpine Skiing, it is not as easily distinguishable as for instance in Formula One. This mixture may occur because the sport itself is limited to mountainous regions in certain countries, and possibly also due to the comparative easiness of going Alpine Skiing than for instance racing a Formula One car.

Moreover, the sample does not entirely avoid biases. On the one hand, the sample lacks gender diversity since only one woman could be recruited. Thus, the female perspective is underrepresented in content-related and sport-specific issues which may limit the results delineated herein towards one gender. On the other hand, a geographical bias does influence the results of this master's thesis too. Out of the 13 Experts interviewed, 12 are European, and only one Expert is from the United States. Thus, this thesis may not provide a complete picture of both the American Alpine Skiing market and about sports in the United States generally. Notwithstanding the Experts generally agree upon the influence streaming has, the meaningfulness towards the American sports market may need to be put into perspective. Subsequently, this master's thesis does not entirely close the scientific gap presented in the introduction due to the partial lack of scientific literature and the incompleteness of the sample considering the American sports market.

Regardless of these limitations, this master's thesis reaches its goal of outlining the potential of streaming. As it shows both beneficiary and adverse factors for the success of such a series and outlines its possible design, this master's thesis managed to provide answers for the research questions but is still naturally limited.

5.2. Theoretical implications

Within this master's thesis, it is broadly outlined that if a particular sport is not widely liked in a pre-defined market, an innovate media approach such as streaming may be suitable to increase the popularity of this sport. The ever-increasing number of streaming consumers may be applied to the advantage of a sport, especially if one sport is historically lacking tradition and not widely considered by traditional forms of media in a country. This way, for instance, the fandom of Baseball could be increased in the Federal Republic of Germany or Ice Hockey in the Commonwealth of Australia.

In addition, this master's thesis also outlines the implication of how important the alignment of strategic interests of any party involved in marketing a sport is. Especially overcoming marketing interests which subsequently include broadcasting rights is of importance to achieve marketing success. Subsequently, factors that can influence the popularity of sports are shown too. Especially the incorporation of country-specific cultural considerations into marketing strategies is of importance as these factors strongly impact customer preferences. Moreover, the showcasing of correlations in active and passive sports as well as health aspects can be deemed essential.

Towards the third research question, this master's thesis strongly indicates how important the integration of behind-the-scenes contents is and which role both personal and emotional connections can play nowadays. The increasing migration of entertainment content into sports as well as the mixture of genres define the preferences of American audiences. The United States also show favorability for action-contents and domestic American athletes around whom a storyboard or narration may be built. Moreover, with respect to the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, thus sports marketing-related theories, the marketability of the speed disciplines is ranked above the technical disciplines; nevertheless, the need to stick these categories in some way together cannot be diminished. In this regard, as this master's thesis taps into scientifically comparatively uncharted territory, it lays an even more solid foundation for further research opportunities.

5.3. Further research perspectives

In consideration of the first research question, future research project may investigate how and if a streaming series can influence the popularity of an already well-established sport, such as for instance American Football in the United States of America or Soccer in the Federal Republic of Germany. Future research projects may go beyond the focus on video streaming and include how audio streaming productions can influence fandom of a particular sport. Because the influence of television in sports, the strengths and weaknesses of both television and streaming regarding sports may also be analyzed in comparison with each other to provide a holistic marketing approach.

Since this master's thesis identifies various factors that influence the popularity of Alpine Skiing in the United States, future research may investigate if and how factors such as income, culture attachment to a particular sport, the likeliness of learning on sport at school, or geographical limitations are deemed decisive not only whether one would go skiing her- or himself but also whether this influences the perception of professional Alpine Skiing. Research may also investigate how demographic denominations differ in their preference for a certain kind of sport. As health aspects and the correlation of active and passive sports also emerged throughout the interviews, these correlations may also be investigated, not only if scientifically investigating the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup but in other sports as well.

Regarding the design of a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, the results provide future research opportunities such as whether some contents are deemed more interesting by a certain target group than others, for instance whether a particular target group is more interested in being shown behind-the-scenes contents or if a documentary design is preferred. Furthermore, the factors that are identified herein to influence the design of a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World such as heroism or the standing of speed and technical disciplines could be tested upon their actual relevance. Research may also investigate whether it is deemed a necessity to adhere to American patriotism in streaming, and if patriotism or nationalism increase the fandom of a particular sport. Additionally, if a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup was *indeed* introduced in the United States of America, future research may also investigate on *if* and *how* the perception of professional Alpine Skiing in the country changed. Naturally, this research approach may also be applied upon the introduction of productions about other sports in other countries as well.

5.4. Strategic perspectives and practical implications

At large, a streaming series may be beneficial for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America. It is worth being considered in terms of a holistic market approach for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup. This master's thesis highlights how a certain marketing potential remains unfolded that can be brought to life through a streaming series. Mostly because television coverage about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup has rarely changed over time, a gap streaming may fill arises. However, since television remains the dominant media force for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup, marketers shall also include television in their marketing equation. Nevertheless, if a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is to be designed, one shall take into consideration the difficult position this sport has in the United States of America.

The newly acquired insights are strategically relevant since they provide a framework for the design of a streaming series about sports, especially highlighting the demands of the American sports audience. This master's thesis provides practical knowledge in the fractured American sports streaming environment and highlights how the courting of American sports streaming consumers can be implemented successfully. As sports in the United States are associated with a sense of national unity, a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup shall include a reference to the country itself, best visible probably through a national hero. Moreover, since the consumption of actual sports is declining, a streaming series shall also provide insights into the behind-the-scenes conduct. It should showcase rivalries (although possibly scripted) and generally combine sports and entertainment, very well visible through highlighting the speed disciplines Downhill and Super G.

In conclusion, this master's thesis shows that a streaming series is an innovative way to overcome the marketing potential of the television-dominated FIS Alpine Ski World Cup and to increase its popularity in the United States. However, numerous factors such as conflicting marketing interests and especially cultural factors make this endeavor rather difficult, although a way to design such a streaming series is provided. The results outline multiple further research opportunities and name factors that influence the popularity of a single sport in a narrowly defined market.

Statement on the application of generative AI and AI-supported technologies

To complete this master's thesis, ChatGPT 3.5 was used to improve the readability of the entire work, and its suggestions were partly considered for the revision of the category system on which the evaluation and discussion are based. After using this tool, I carefully examined the respective contents and the subsequent results. I take full responsibility for the application of artificial intelligence and this master's thesis contents.

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List of Abbreviations

COVID 19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EMEA	Europe, Middle East and Africa
FIA	Federation Internationale de l'Automobile
FIS	Fédération Internationale de Ski et de Snowboard
FIS	International Ski and Snowboard Federation
FOG	Formula One Group
GSBS	Global Sporting Governing Body
IOC	International Olympic Committee
MLB	Major League Baseball
Moto GP	Grand Prix Motorcycle Racing
NASCAR	National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing
NBA	National Basketball Association
NCAAB	National Collegiate Athletic Association Basketball
NCAAF	National Collegiate Athletic Association Football
NFL	National Football League
NHL	National Hockey League
NHRA	National Hot Rod Association
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OESV	Österreichischer Skiverband (Ski Austria)
OTT(T)	Over-the-top (technology)
PGA	Professional Golfers' Association
RSN	Regional Sports Network
SLS(S)	Social live streaming (services)
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
US(A)	United States (of America)
VoD	Video-on-Demand

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Appendix

Interview Guideline – English version:

Introduction

- Introduction of myself
- Information
 - Voluntary participation
 - Anonymized evaluation
 - Obtaining consent for the recording
- Salutation and introduction of interviewer and interviewee.
- Explanation of the interview objective(s), introduction into the research problem.

Background information

- Please introduce yourself (nationality, age, job and position, experience with sports marketing).

Category 1: Enhancement of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America through a streaming series

- Can you think of a sport whose popularity has increased because of a streaming product?
 - If yes, which factors do you think contributed to the success of this streaming product?
 - What could be the strategic backgrounds that the responsible marketers chose streaming as a marketing tool?
 - If you have applied streaming as a marketing tool, have you had a positive experience with, and why or why not? / If you have not applied streaming as marketing tool yet, why, and which factors have been decisive?
- Please assess the current marketing state of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in general and whether streaming might be beneficial in marketing terms or not.
 - Do you think the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is using up its full potential in terms of marketing?
 - May a streaming series be economically beneficial for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup?
 - Is the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup a kind of sport that is suitable for being marketed through a streaming series?

- Which dangers does a streaming marketing strategy provide for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup?
- Which age groups can be courted through a streaming marketing strategy?
- Could the less social media- and technology-savvy be disadvantaged?
- How would you consider the importance of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America?
- How would you consider the importance of the United States of America for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup?
- Which benefits or risks might an increased popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America create for marketing considerations?

Category 2: Favorable and unfavorable factors for the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America

- Which region or country do you consider the home market for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup and why?
 - Why did the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup historically always struggle to pull itself through in the U.S.?
 - What are the major differences in this region/country compared to the United States of America?
 - Compared to other countries, Alpine Skiing is not geographically possible to a wide extent. How does this limitation influence the professional sports' stance in the country?
- Please assess why professional races such as the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup generally keep a very low profile in the United States of America despite the country having the world's highest amount of ski lifts and skiers.
 - How would you describe the sports' medial status in the country?
 - Why are professional ski races comparatively poorly covered by various media outlets?
- How does the United States of America's bad reputation considering obesity, dietary habits, or regular exercise constitute an adverse factor for the perception of both leisure and professional sports generally in the country?
 - How could these issues be applied to positively interfere the perception of professional Alpine Skiing?
 - Do you think health aspect affects the perception of Alpine Skiing as professional sport?

- What influence do demographic considerations have on the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America?
 - Compared to other countries, how may the larger target group outweigh the fact that skiing is not among the most liked sports?
 - In which way does the countries diversity affect the development of the FIS Ski Alpine World Cup in the country?
 - Alpine Skiing has a high-price reputation, especially in the U.S. compared to Europe. How could this factor influence the perception of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup?
 - Could the factor that Alpine Skiing is a seasonal sports contribute to the success of a sports streaming product in the United States of America?

Category 3: Design of a streaming series to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America

- Please illustrate which aspects you would be showing to the audience if you oversaw a streaming series about the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup!
 - What kind of content would someone like to see who has never been engaged with the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup before?
 - Would consumers rather be interested in professional Alpine Skiing (Olympic Games, World Championships, World Cup etc.) or from a mass sport's perspective to become fans of the sport?
 - Please consider whether the speed or technical disciplines are more promising from a marketing perspective.
 - How can people who used to be interested be courted again?
 - Which aspects do you consider irrelevant for the audience?
 - How do you assess the importance of telling background stories, background information etc.?
 - To which extent do rivalries and fights outperform a clear narrative path?
 - In which way do you think are consumers interested in being explaining rules and technical details in a streaming series?
- To which extent do American sports consumers need to be approached differently than consumers in other countries, especially in Alpine Skiing?
 - What are the sports media preferences of viewers in countries where Alpine Skiing is more popular than in the United States of America?
 - Please consider whether all age cohorts can be courted the same way? How differently do age cohorts would need to be approached?

Conclusion

- Summarizing key statements of the interviewee and giving the opportunity to remove ambiguities/uncertainties.
- Opportunity for the interviewee to add further thoughts or information, possibility to answer open questions.
- Coordination whether the results of this work shall be transmitted after completion of the master's thesis.
- Thanks for participation and insights provided.

Interview Guideline – German version:

Einleitung

- Vorstellung meiner Person
- Informationen
 - Freiwillige Teilnahme
 - Anonymisierte Auswertung
 - Zustimmung zur Aufnahme einholen
- Begrüßung und Vorstellung von Interviewer und Interviewtem
- Erläuterung der Zielsetzung(en) des Interviews, Einführung in das Forschungsproblem

Hintergrundinformationen

- Bitte stellen Sie sich vor (Nationalität, Alter, Beruf und Position, Erfahrung mit Sportmarketing).

Kategorie 1: Steigerung der Popularität des FIS Alpinen Skiweltcups in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika durch eine Streamingserie

- Fällt Ihnen eine Sportart ein, deren Popularität durch ein Streamingprodukt gestiegen ist?
 - Wenn ja, welche Faktoren haben Ihrer Meinung nach zum Erfolg dieses Streamingprodukts beigetragen?
 - Was könnten die strategischen Hintergründe dafür sein, dass die Marketingverantwortlichen Streaming als Marketinginstrument gewählt haben?
 - Wenn Sie Streaming als Marketinginstrument eingesetzt haben, haben Sie damit positive Erfahrungen gemacht, und warum oder warum nicht? / Wenn Sie Streaming als Marketinginstrument noch nicht eingesetzt haben, warum, und welche Faktoren waren ausschlaggebend?
- Bitte betrachten Sie den aktuellen Stand der Vermarktung des FIS Alpine Skiweltcups im Allgemeinen und ob Streaming in Bezug auf die Vermarktung von Vorteil sein könnte oder nicht.
 - Sind Sie der Meinung, dass der FIS Alpine Skiweltcup sein volles Vermarktungspotential ausschöpft?
 - Könnte eine Streamingserie für den FIS Alpinen Skiweltcup von wirtschaftlichem Vorteil sein?
 - Ist der FIS Alpine Skiweltcup eine Sportart, die sich für eine Vermarktung durch eine Streamingserie eignet?

- Welche Gefahren birgt eine Streaming-Vermarktungsstrategie für den FIS Alpinen Skiweltcup?
- Welche Altersgruppen können durch eine Streaming-Vermarktungsstrategie umworben werden?
- Könnten die weniger Social Media- und Technologie-affinen Personen benachteiligt werden?
- Wie würden Sie die Bedeutung des FIS Alpinen Skiweltcups in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika einschätzen?
- Wie würden Sie die Bedeutung der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika für den FIS Alpinen Skiweltcup einschätzen?
- Welche Vorteile oder Risiken könnte eine erhöhte Popularität des FIS Alpinen Skiweltcups in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika für Marketingüberlegungen mit sich bringen?

Kategorie 2: Günstige und ungünstige Faktoren für den Erfolg einer solchen Streamingserie in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika

- Welche Region oder welches Land betrachten Sie als den Heimatmarkt für den FIS Alpinen Skiweltcup und warum?
 - Warum hatte es der FIS Alpine Skiweltcup in der Vergangenheit immer schwer, sich in den USA durchzusetzen?
 - Was sind die Hauptunterschiede dieser Region/dieses Land im Vergleich zu den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika?
 - Im Vergleich zu anderen Ländern ist der alpine Skisport geografisch nicht nur eingeschränkt möglich. Wie wirkt sich diese Einschränkung auf den Stellenwert des Profisports im Land aus?
- Bitte beurteilen Sie, warum professionelle Rennen wie der FIS Alpine Skiweltcup in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika im Allgemeinen sehr wenig öffentliche Beachtung finden, obwohl das Land die meisten Skilifte und Skifahrer der Welt hat.
 - Wie würden Sie den medialen Stellenwert des Sports in Ihrem Land beschreiben?
 - Warum wird vergleichsweise wenig über professionelle Skirennen in den verschiedenen Medien berichtet?
- Inwiefern ist der schlechte Ruf der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika in Bezug auf Fettleibigkeit, Ernährungsgewohnheiten oder regelmäßige Bewegung ein negativer Faktor für die Wahrnehmung des Freizeit- und des Profisports im Allgemeinen in diesem Land?

- o Wie könnte man diese Aspekte nutzen, um die Wahrnehmung des professionellen Skisports positiv zu beeinflussen?
- o Glauben Sie, dass der Gesundheitsaspekt die Wahrnehmung des alpinen Skisports als Berufssport beeinflusst?
- Welchen Einfluss haben demographische Überlegungen auf die Popularität des FIS Alpinen Skiweltcup in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika?
 - o Wie kann die im Vergleich zu anderen Ländern größere Zielgruppe die Tatsache aufwiegen, dass Skifahren nicht zu den beliebtesten Sportarten gehört?
 - o Inwiefern wirkt sich die Vielfalt des Landes auf die Entwicklung des FIS Alpinen Skiweltcups im Land aus?
 - o Der Alpine Skisport genießt vor allem in den USA im Vergleich zu Europa einen Ruf als teure Sportart. Wie könnte dieser Faktor die Wahrnehmung des FIS Alpinen Skiweltcups beeinflussen?
 - o Könnte der Faktor, dass der Alpine Skisport eine saisonale Sportart ist, zum Erfolg eines Streamingprodukts in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika beitragen?

Kategorie 3: Gestaltung einer Streaming-Serie zur Steigerung der Popularität des FIS Alpinen Skiweltcups in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika

- Bitte erläutern Sie, welche Inhalte Sie den Zuschauern zeigen würden, wenn Sie eine Streamingserie über den FIS Alpinen Skiweltcup gestalten würden!
 - o Welche Art von Inhalten würde jemand sehen wollen, der sich noch nie mit dem FIS Alpinen Skiweltcup beschäftigt hat?
 - o Würden sich die Konsumenten eher für den professionellen Alpinen Skisport interessieren (Olympische Spiele, Weltmeisterschaften, Weltcup etc.) oder für die Perspektive des Breitensports, um zu Fans des Sports zu werden?
 - o Überlegen Sie, ob die Speed- oder die technischen Disziplinen aus der Marketingperspektive erfolgversprechender sind.
 - o Wie können ehemals am Alpinen Skisport Interessierte wieder umworben werden?
 - o Welche Aspekte halten Sie für das Publikum für uninteressant?
 - o Wie schätzen Sie die Bedeutung des Erzählens von Hintergrundgeschichten, Hintergrundinformationen etc. ein?
 - o Inwieweit sind Rivalitäten und Kämpfe wichtiger als ein klarer Erzählstrang?
 - o Inwieweit sind die Konsumenten Ihrer Meinung nach daran interessiert, dass in einer Streaming-Serie Regeln und technische Details erklärt werden?

- Inwiefern müssen amerikanische Sportkonsumenten anders angesprochen werden als Konsumenten in anderen Ländern, insbesondere im Alpinen Skisport?
 - o Was sind die sportlich-medialen Präferenzen der Zuseher in jenen Ländern, in welchen Alpine Skisport populärer als in den USA ist?
 - o Bitte überlegen Sie, ob alle Altersgruppen auf die gleiche Weise umworben werden können. Wie unterschiedlich müssten die Altersgruppen angesprochen werden?

Gespraechsende

- Zusammenfassung der wichtigsten Aussagen des Befragten und Möglichkeit, Unklarheiten zu beseitigen.
- Möglichkeit für den Befragten, weitere Gedanken oder Informationen hinzuzufügen, Möglichkeit zur Beantwortung offener Fragen.
- Abstimmung, ob die Ergebnisse dieser Arbeit nach Fertigstellung der Masterarbeit übermittelt werden sollen.
- Bedanken für die Teilnahme und die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse.

Code System (original version during the evaluation process):

Code System	Memo	Frequency
Code System		253
Enhancement of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America through a streaming series		8
Marketing potential of the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup		8
Preferred standing of television		5
Streaming and sports marketing		21
Favorable and unfavorable factors for the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America		5
Preferred sports in the United States		10
Sports rights		9
Sports and the American media		5
Home market of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup		12
Limiting factors for the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States		3
Professional Alpine Skiing as a niche sport		13
College and school sports		6

Olympics	8
Geographical implications	12
Financial resources	12
Season sports	14
Demographics	5
Correlation of active and passive sports	14
Health aspects	7
Design of a streaming series to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America	18
American sports consumerism	5
Sports and entertainment	8
Behind-the-scenes content	15
Heroism	19
Speed and technical disciplines	11

Code System (applied):

Code System	Frequency
	253
Enhancement of the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America through a streaming series	29
Marketing potential of the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup	8
The preferred standing of television	10
Factors influencing the success of such a streaming series in the United States of America	8
Conflicting marketing interests	9
Foreign origin-impact on the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup	12
Cultural factors influencing the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America	68
Emphasis on traditional American sports	23
Demographic considerations	5
Geographic and seasonal considerations	26
College and school sports	6

Olympic influence	8
Financial demands and the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup	12
Health aspects and target group expansion	7
Economic implications of the correlation of active and passive engagement	14
Design of a streaming series to increase the popularity of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in the United States of America	23
The American demand for entertainment	8
Behind-the-scenes content	15
Heroism	19
Speed and technical disciplines	11