

**Plot Twist**

**Amazon Prime Video's arrival in live football streaming: a shift in Millennials' habits of watching the Ligue 1**

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MILLENNIALS' HABITS OF WATCHING THE LIGUE 1

## ABSTRACT

**Relevance of the topic:** Since 2016, there has been a massive change in the sports broadcasting rights market with the introduction of the GAFA (Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple) and their streaming video services in Anglo-Saxon countries. This change is spreading progressively and concerns France as well. In 2020, Prime Video became the main distributor of the French professional football championship, the Ligue 1, from 2021 to 2024. It drew the media's attention because it was the first time that an OTT (over-the-top) streaming video platform became a leading distributor of a licensed sport in France. Researchers talk about the "Netflix-ication of the sports industry," which concerns many countries (Lindholm, 2019). This process impacted the balance between the distributors in the sports broadcasting market, but it is interesting to focus on the audience and whether it impacted their viewing habits.

**Theoretical framework:** In the French context, football has not been seen as a noble topic of research for a long time. Therefore, there are few studies available about the subject of this research paper. Besides, the process of "Netflix-ication of sports broadcasting" started to happen recently, in 2020. To bypass the lack of academic resources on the topic, this paper draws inspiration from previous research conducted in other European countries (the UK and Spain mostly) and overseas in the US. Studies about the English Premier League have been privileged due to the many similarities between the championship and the broadcasting rights market with those of the Ligue 1.

**Research question:** How do French viewers aged between 20-29 years old perceive the arrival of Prime Video as the new leading distributor of the French Ligue 1, and how does this arrival affect their consumption practices?

**Method:** In order to provide an answer to the research question, in-depth interviews are favored. These in-depth interviews are semi-structured.

**Parts:** This paper is divided into three parts, focusing on the answers provided by the interviewees. The first part deals with the sports consumption of the interviewees and what type of football content they watch. The second part concerns the interviewees' viewing experience and how it could have changed after the arrival of Prime Video. The last part concentrates on the "Netflix-ication" of the French football industry and how the interviewees perceive this change regarding their consumption of football.

**Results:** The data collected permitted us to understand that the development of video streaming platforms and internet-connected cord-cutting devices influences consumers' viewing patterns and

consumption of watching the Ligue 1. It increases the practice of mediated football consumption. Besides, the arrival of Prime Video and the Pass Ligue 1 offer an immersive experience within the championship with options not initially provided by traditional TV channels. Watching the whole of the Ligue 1 has a significant cost due to the several subscriptions required. Consequently, it contributes to the use of illegal streaming websites or devices like IPTV and account sharing to bypass financial issues and save money. The "Netflix-ication" of the Ligue 1 broadcasting system invites us to rethink the current distribution system that needs to change to propose offers that focus more on the clients' needs and desires and offer more flexibility. Prime Video and other streaming platforms could be the next leading actors in the broadcasting rights market in football over traditional TV channels. They might be the most advantageous option for millennials willing to consume sports content and to have a centralized platform that provide an offer adapted to their personal needs.

**KEYWORDS:** Football, Ligue 1, France, Amazon Prime Video, live sport, viewing habits, Netflix-ication, over-the-top (OTT) platforms, broadcasting rights, streaming video, television, millennials

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1. <i>OTT platforms as disruptive technologies in the entertainment industry</i> .....	12
2.2. <i>Concept of mediated consumption</i> .....	12
2.3. <i>The “Netflix-ication” of sports broadcasting</i> .....	13
2.4. <i>The main actors in the broadcasting rights market</i> .....	14
2.5. <i>The lack of studies regarding the French context</i> .....	15
2.6. <i>The audience’s viewing habits</i> .....	16
<b>3. METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>1. Presentation of the chosen method: in-depth interviewing</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>2. Interview guide</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>3. Operationalization</b> .....	<b>21</b>
3.1. <i>Objectives of the research</i> .....	22
3.2. <i>Description of the target audience</i> .....	22
3.3. <i>Casting interviewees process</i> .....	23
3.4. <i>Conducting the interviews</i> .....	24
3.5. <i>Transcription</i> .....	25
3.6. <i>Challenges</i> .....	26
<b>4. RESULTS</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>1. Sports consumption</b> .....	<b>27</b>
1.1. <i>Driving factors</i> .....	27
1.2. <i>Means of consumption</i> .....	30
<b>2. Viewing experience</b> .....	<b>31</b>
2.1. <i>Illegal streaming use</i> .....	31
2.2. <i>The time allowed to watch live football and the type of content consumed</i> .....	37
<b>3. The “Netflix-cation of sports broadcasting”</b> .....	<b>39</b>
3.1. <i>The distributors’ offer &amp; Amazon’s strategy</i> .....	39
3.2. <i>Amazon’s strategy</i> .....	42
3.3. <i>Rethink the distributors offer system</i> .....	43
<b>5. CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>1. Main observations</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>2. Limitations</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>3. Discussion</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>6. REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>7. APPENDIX</b> .....	<b>60</b>

<b>Appendix 1: interview guide .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Chart n°1 .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Call for witnesses posted on social media.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Chart n°2 .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Appendix 5: Chart n°3 .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Appendix 6: Chart n°4 .....</b>	<b>68</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

*"The mindset of sports, what it brings, the idea of pushing yourself, the competition, I really enjoy supporting and feeling emotions through winning and losing, etc. That's what it brings to me when I watch sports. " (Baptiste, an interviewee)*

Live sporting events gather a large number of viewers worldwide and are a big part of the income generated in the entertainment industry. As an example, according to the American economic magazine, Forbes, the average value of the fifty most valuable sports clubs represented \$3.4 billion in 2021, with among them the Spanish football club, FC Barcelona, which is the world's most profitable football club with a \$4.76 billion worth of value (Ozanian, 2021a; Ozanian, 2021b). In terms of viewership, according to FIFA, the 2018 edition of the World Cup in Russia gathered around 3.572 billion viewers, which is a record (FIFA, 2018). These figures demonstrate the significance of the sports business and why it is a valuable asset for media distributors. Live sports have been a must-have for television with the professionalization of sports and the development of communication technologies (Durand et al., 2010). Because sporting events have the potential to draw a huge audience, free TV channels compete for the broadcasting rights to major events such as the Olympic Games or various international championships such as the FIFA World Cup (Baimbridge et al., 1996; Durand et al., 2010). Football, for example, is one of the most popular sports in the world and is seen as a "mass" and "community" sport that draws people together (Durand et al., 2010). The government considers football "top-listed events to be the property of the whole nation" (Baimbridge et al., 1996).

Football is a major component of television programming and the industry's principal source of revenue (Baimbridge, 1996). On a continental level, European football, which is known for its excellent quality, is widely aired and generates a large amount of revenue through the sale of broadcasting rights. The competition for broadcasting rights used to be fought by TV channels, and it was based on the shortage of offers to the audience (Koutroumanides et al., 2019a p.45). Yet, there is a transition and a "Netflix-ification" of sports broadcasting as the internet and streaming services emerge (Lindholm, 2019). The recent purchase of 80% of the broadcasting rights to the French Premier League, Ligue 1, by Amazon's streaming service Prime Video is a step in this direction (Jacquot, 2021). One of the main reasons I decided to focus my inquiry on this topic is the progressive change that the French football industry is undergoing.

The question of distribution rights is still a burning issue due to the rise in distribution rights prices. As an example, the French sports broadcasting rights went from €510 million in 2000 to €1,650 million



in 2020, reaching a peak in 2019 with €1,760 million (CSA, 2021). Different factors contributed to the sudden rise in prices. Among them, there is the multiplication of distributors due to football's attractiveness (Andreff & Bourg, 2006) or the stars evolving in the championship (Scelles, 2017). Football generates important income for broadcasters and teams in terms of advertising and viewers. For example, during the 2017-2018 season, sponsorship and advertising profits were distributed among the three most prominent teams in the Ligue 1, Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), the Olympique Lyonnais (OL), and the Olympique de Marseille (OM) (LFP, 2019 p.27). In 2010, television rights accounted for 50% to 60% of a football club's revenue (Riolo, 2010 p.94).

To properly grasp the stakes surrounding this subject, it is crucial to contextualize the broadcasting rights market and identify the market's major players. Football, as noted before, is a huge stream of revenue for television, which has led to a dependency between the two (Durand et al., 2010). Before the entrance of Amazon and Prime Video, pay-TV networks held a monopoly on the distribution rights for Ligue 1. The history of the Ligue 1's primary distributors is based on a transition from public to private TV channels, and subsequently from private TV channels to video streaming platforms (Scelles et al., 2019).

From 1945 to 1974, the RDF (Radiodiffusion Française) held a monopoly on public services, followed by the RTF (Radio Télédiffusion Française), the ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française), and ultimately the three main public broadcasting stations, TF1, Antenne 2, and FR3 (Scelles, et al., 2019). This duopoly/monopoly by public services is the first step of the five-step process described by Scelles et al. (2019) to explain the transition from public services to private distributors concerning the distribution of broadcasting rights of the Ligue 1. This process is also happening with the English Premier League because the French and English football economic systems and organizations are similar (Scelles et al., 2019; Koutroumanides et al., 2019a). With the technological innovations of broadcasting systems, broadcasting rights of live football became more regulated in the 1980s-1990s, which coincided with the arrival of satellite and encrypted TV channels (Scelles et al., 2019).

The privatization of TV channels permitted the creation of pay-TV channels, which became new competitors in the broadcasting rights market. Among these channels, there was Canal+, created in 1984, which was the first French pay-TV channel. Canal+ wanted to offer quality service and content dedicated to sports and cinema (Riolo, 2010). To do so, Canal+ proposed a multi-content offer with several channels (Canal+ Sport, Sport+ or Canal + Premium) (Dutaret, 2008). As a result, Canal+ has become the main distributor of the Ligue 1. As an example, the 2005-2006 season was the most money-making season for the channel because the deal signed with the LFP (Ligue de Football Professionnel, translated as Professional Football League) was the most profitable in football history. It contributed to an increase in Ligue 1 revenues of €600 million and allowed the championship to avoid a financial loss (Koutroumanides et al., 2019b).

Canal+'s monopoly, however, came to an end due to a lack of interest in football among French viewers and the multiplication of distributors (Dutaret, 2008; Koutroumanides et al., 2019b; EY & The Nemo Point, 2021). Indeed, according to the report, "L'industrie française du sport en danger," the multi-platform offer proposed by TV channels and OTT platforms allows the audience to consume live sports differently without the constraints of watching them on TV (EY & The Nemo Point, 2021). Besides, the business model applied by Canal+ was not suitable for the development of these new habits of viewing, and that is why the channel lost its leading position in the market (Dutaret, 2008). Hence, rivals of Canal+ were able to take over the monopoly that used to be held by the private TV channel.

After the partial withdrawal of Canal+ from the broadcasting rights market, the Spanish-Chinese TV channel, Mediapro, became the main distributor of the Ligue 1 after it won the call for tenders launched by the LFP in 2020. The TV channel spent €830 million to purchase the distribution rights for the championship until 2024 (Tronchet, 2021). As a result, the French channel Téléfoot, specially dedicated to the championship, was created. However, due to financial issues, in part caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, provoking a decrease in the advertising profits for the group, the channel was a failure and Mediapro was unable to pay the monthly payments. These payments were estimated at around €325 million. The group was forced to pay a €100 million indemnity to the LFP because of the crisis that it provoked and the urgency to find another distributor, which was Canal+ (Belin, 2021).

This crisis was an opportunity for Canal+ to reinforce its domination over the broadcasting rights market. Mediapro's disengagement results from unsuccessful negotiations with the LFP about the price of the settlements that the company was unable to pay (Belin, 2020; Autorité de la concurrence, 2021). To cover this failure and limit the consequences that it could provoke, Canal+ came back under the spotlights as the main distributor of the competition for the end of the 2019-2020 football season. At the end of a judicial battle to renegotiate the terms of the deal with the LFP, Canal+ purchased the broadcasting rights for an amount of €200 million (Belin, 2021; AFP, 2021). Nevertheless, Canal+ asked more than expected by the LFP by asking to secure all the most important games of the competition for a reduced price and to reduce the number of teams evolving in the league from twenty to eighteen (AFP, 2021; Autorité de la concurrence, 2021; Gautrat, 2021). As a consequence, the encrypted channel was deserted by the LFP in favor of Amazon on the occasion of the call for bids to find the new distributors of the Ligue 1 from 2021 to 2024.

Amazon and its streaming platform, Prime Video, obtained 80% of the Ligue 1 content broadcast in France after obtaining the broadcasting rights for the French Open, Roland-Garros (Campisi, 2021). Thanks to this deal signed with the LFP, Amazon has the authorization to broadcast the most important games of the week, which includes the games scheduled for Sunday at 9 p.m. (Belin, 2021). The arrival of an OTT platform as the main distributor has disturbed the balance between the distributors and the audience's viewing habits. Indeed, Prime Video takes mediated live sports consumption to another level

by proposing a multiplatform offer and the possibility for the viewer to get a more personalized and individual experience of watching live sports (Kim & Mao, 2021).

"Due to the advancement in technology and the availability of ample content, the viewing habits of consumers are experiencing a shift" (Sadana & Sharma, 2021, p.351). In the case of football, the arrival of OTT platforms like Prime Video permits us to observe that the current model favored by football leagues and clubs may struggle (Koutroumanides et al., 2019a; Belin, 2021) and that the viewers might want to experience football differently by having access to a platform centralizing their interests instead of purchasing different subscription programs (Hutchins et al., 2019). It is important to note that the acquisition of broadcasting rights by OTT platforms in France began in 2020, but this is not an isolated case. Since 2016, several foreign leagues have seen a shift in their broadcasting rights allocation arrangements (Bailey, G., 2019; Hutchins et al., 2019, Koutroumanides et al., 2019a). The Premier League in England, the NFL in North America, and the Liga in Spain are all examples of this.

For this reason, I decided to work on the reception of the French audience regarding the arrival of Prime Video as the leading distributor of the Ligue 1 in France. It is a relevant topic to study due to the lack of studies about this topic. For a long time, football was not considered a noble topic to work on (Paché & N'Goala, 2011). Furthermore, it is important to take into account the newness of the topic because the acquisition of the broadcasting rights of the French Premier League occurred in 2020. Therefore, its number of studies is very restricted. It is for this reason that the research question of my master's thesis will be how do French viewers aged between 20-29 years old perceive the arrival of Prime Video as the new leading distributor of the French Ligue 1 and how does this arrival affect their consumption practices?

In order to present the results of this research, which aims at providing an answer to the above research question, this Master's thesis will be divided into four parts. The first part will be devoted to establishing the theoretical framework of the subject of this research. Then, the next part will deal with the methodology to explain in detail how this research was conducted. A third part will focus on the results obtained from this investigation; the fourth and final part will discuss the limitations of this research and the research that can be conducted in the future.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for the French context contains a few resources to use because of the newness of this topic. Nevertheless, we can assume that this topic gathers several disciplines, which are television studies, audience studies, sports marketing, and psychology. The study of the development of streaming services has been covered by several scholars. This research focuses on streaming platforms such as Netflix or Prime Video, which are perceived as disruptive technologies (Curran & Hesmondhalgh, 2019; Major, 2021), and explains how the development of these streaming media services has restructured the film and TV industries. In the case of sports consumption, some researchers have worked on this topic (Hutchins et al., 2019; Lindholm, 2019). They pointed out the development of the internet and how the sports industry, which relies heavily on television, is now facing a drastic change with the progressive advent of streaming media services as distributors.

### 2.1. *OTT platforms as disruptive technologies in the entertainment industry*

For this reason, one of the key concepts of this research will be the concept of "disruptive technology" (Christensen, 1997, mentioned by Küng, 2017). It can be defined as transformational advances that indicate a break with existing systems and processes, causing changes in other subsystems and linking mechanisms. In the case of the football industry, television has been viewed as a disruptive technology. The development of the free-to-air television system before the arrival of the internet was the first step in the televisual revolution (Hutchins et al., 2019). Live sports combine several "qualities of liveness, emotion and appeal to identity, making it ideal for subscription platforms, which demand a strong justification for viewers to pay to watch television content" (Hutchins et al., 2019 p.976). In the case of the European context, this innovation related to live sports was initially developed in the UK and then arrived in France later as an innovation (Ravenel, 1996). With the development of the internet, we can observe that streaming media services are following the same direction as the development of 'mediated sports consumption' (Kim & Mao, 2021, pp.515–516).

### 2.2. *Concept of mediated consumption*

The concept of "mediated sports consumption" is one of the key concepts of this research. It contributes to setting the theoretical framework to propose a comprehensive understanding of the process of "Netflix-ication" in live sports. The concept of "mediated sports consumption" has been defined by Kim & Mao (2021) as "a consumption of sports through substitute outlets, including home television, online streaming, social networking, sports bars, and movie cinema, is an alternative to physical attendance" (Raney, 2006; Weed, 2007; Fairley & Tyler, 2012; mentioned by Kim & Mao,

2021 pp.515-516). Mediated sports consumption can be perceived as a substitute for stadium attendance. "Quickly evolving technological trends such as high-definition televisions, surround sound stereo, and slow-motion replays have created a mediated sports product that rivals an in-stadium experience" (Dwyer & Drayer, 2010 p.208). Thus, these aforementioned technical innovations echo the notion of disrupted technology evoked above.

The application of the concept of "disruptive technology" to live sports allows us to highlight "the intersection between technology, culture, and media practice" (Hutchins et al., 2019 p.978) and how the development of streaming platforms is drastically changing live sports practices and consumption. Live sports broadcasting has been impacted by the increase in the number of available devices to broadcast sports events. It is now possible to get access to live sports on smartphones, tablets, computers, and television screens. As a consequence, "the availability of 'more television' content" is more significant than ever before (Lotz, 2014, mentioned by Hutchins et al., 2019). For that reason, "live sport [has become] the most valuable form of premium content in the global media marketplace, supplying spectacular content for media events." (Hutchins et al., 2019, p. 978).

Due to the development of over-the-top streaming platforms, the audience's viewing habits have been changing. Technological innovations with multifunction internet-connected devices (computers, smartphones, tablets, and game consoles) offer the possibility for a viewer to download and stream content that can be consumed from everywhere. These devices are called "cord-cutting devices". "The term "cord-cutting" is used to metaphorically evoke an image of severing the connection between traditional cable access and the consumer" (Tefertiller, 2018 p.390). Most of these cord-cutting devices "are alternative viewing screens as well, liberating the viewer from being tethered to a fixed TV set" (Banerjee et al., 2014 p.20). The flexibility given by these types of devices contributed to modifying viewers' consumption because they tended to turn to cord-cutting platforms and less consume television content (Tefertiller, 2018; Banerjee et al., 2014).

### 2.3. *The "Netflix-ication" of sports broadcasting*

The previous paragraph permits us to open on another key concept covered by this master's thesis, the concept of "Netflix-ication of sports broadcasting". This concept was introduced by Lindholm (2019) and can be defined as the proliferation of over-the-top (OTT) streaming platforms in sports broadcasting (Hutchins et al., 2019; Lindholm, 2019). To recontextualize, over-the-top streaming platforms are internet-based services such as Disney+, Amazon Prime, Netflix, or Hulu (Mulla, 2022). These streaming services "are replacing cable TV companies as the go-to medium for entertainment" (Mulla, 2022, p.1). Concerning the sports industry, the arrival of OTT streaming platforms has disturbed the balance found between live sports broadcasting and television. In effect, "sport has long been a cornerstone of the television industry" (Hutchins et al., 2019 p.976). Football was the primary source of

revenue for television advertisers, satellite television providers, and free TV channels, resulting in "dependence" on both sides (Durand et al., 2010).

In France, the financing system of professional sports epitomizes perfectly this "dependence" mentioned above. Indeed, it has been a couple of years since the economic model of professional sports has been facing difficulties and is less and less viable (EY & The Nemo Point, 2021). The professional football industry, with the Ligue 1, is one of the most representative examples of this economic crisis. In order to better seize the extent of this crisis, it is important to explain how the financing and broadcasting systems work. Some reasons can be evoked to explain the origins of this crisis. Among them, there is the question of a monopoly between the main distributors of the league and an economic disequilibrium between the buyers (Hugues, 2008). Professional football clubs competing in the Ligue 1 are strongly dependent on the sale of television broadcasting rights (Koutroumanides et al., 2019b). "In France, TV rights exploitation is one of the clubs' revenues basic sources" (Kourtroumanides et al., 2019b p.34).

Professional football, in particular, was broadcast on television prior to the development and popularity of cord-cutting video services. Rowe (2011), (cited by Scelles et al., 2019 p.493) described the relationship between football and television as symbiotic. This relationship can be described as a "match made in heaven". Each professional league has a "historic TV distributor," such as Sky in the UK for the English Premier League and Canal+ in France for the Ligue 1 (Hugues, 2008). These "historic TV distributors" used to be the ones with a monopoly over the broadcasting rights in their respective countries. In France, Canal+ used to be the channel holding a monopoly on the broadcasting of the Ligue 1 since its creation in 1984 (Koutroumanides et al., 2019b; George, 2018).

#### *2.4. The main actors in the broadcasting rights market*

Canal+ was the first pay-TV channel that broadcast the national championship and used a freemium model. Indeed, the channel broadcasts unencrypted images of the pre-game show before encrypting the game for the subscribers (George, 2018). The diffusion of the Ligue 1 and other French or European competitions was ensured by Canal+ and free TV channels (TF1, M6, W9) that broadcast football games for free (George, 2018). "The sports industry is facing a growing disinterest as French people become less interested in watching live sports events" (EY & The Nemo Point, 2021 p.10). This decrease in interest from the viewers can be explained by several factors, like the lack of uncertainty in the overall ranking (Scelles et al., 2013), the increase in the prices for subscriptions, and the diversification of the distributor offers (Medina et al., 2019).

The transformations in live sports broadcasting due to the development of OTT streaming services have created a new form of competition between regular television and OTT streaming services for the allocation of distribution rights (Hutchins et al., 2019; Mulla, 2022). Regarding live sports distribution, broadcasting rights used to be bought by TV channels (Durand et al., 2010) because football was a must-have for TV channels to attract a large audience and make a profit. However, the advent of streaming platforms such as Prime Video in the sports industry has disturbed the relationship between linear TV channels. Indeed, in the US, in 2017, Prime Video paid US \$50 million for the non-exclusive use of the streaming rights for the National Football League's (NFL) event "Thursday Night Football" (Hutchins et al., 2019).

In Europe, this shift is also occurring, mostly in the UK and Spain. "Several global titans in the area of digital media, social media, internet providers and tech giants like Amazon, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Alibaba, and others, has been increasingly showing interest, and some of them bidding and acquiring sporting events streaming rights" (Koutroumanides et al., 2019a p.48) For example, the cases of the English Premier League and the Spanish Liga are relevant to use to set the theoretical framework regarding marketing studies and gather data because Prime Video is already operating in the English and Spanish sports industries (Koutroumanides et al., 2019a; Alcolea-Díaz & García-Santamaría, 2019). This diversification of distributors for live sports offers the opportunity to create a new type of content. For instance, it enables the creation of original content about football clubs (e.g., the creation of a documentary about Manchester City by Amazon Prime or the desire of Netflix to do the same with Arsenal or Chelsea) (Koutroumanides et al., 2019a).

## 2.5. *The lack of studies regarding the French context*

However, because of the lack of studies about the French context, this paper will use studies dealing with other European football championships and other sports (Koutroumanides et al., 2019a.; Dwyer & Drayer, 2010). I made this decision because the development of sports streaming is more advanced abroad than in France. It will permit me to provide a first insight and approach to the topic that I want to cover in this master's thesis. I would be able to use the observations made on what is happening in foreign football markets to adapt them to the French one. It would help me to structure my research and adapt my findings to the French football market. To do so, I will work on the evolution of the distribution broadcasting rights market in France (Koutroumanides et al., 2019b) and the different key players in the French football industry (Paché & N'Goala, 2011). By underlying these topics, it would facilitate the understanding of the stakes and challenges faced by the Ligue de Football Professionnel (LFP) and explain why the organization favored Prime Video over traditional TV channels to broadcast the championship for the 2021–2024 period.

## 2.6. *The audience's viewing habits*

Furthermore, the audience is another key topic of the master's thesis. Before going further in the explanations, the concept of 'audience' must be defined. The research on audience theory defined the term as "a large mass composed of isolated and unknown individuals" (Ivala, 2007 p.26). Audiences used to be considered passive, but with the development of mass media and the internet, audiences gathered into communities because it changed "the range of skills and experiences inherent in audience-hood" (Nightingale, 1986, mentioned by Neuendorf, 2001 p.348). The audience is now considered "as a mass, audience as an outcome, and as an agent" (Webster 1998, mentioned by Neuendorf, 2001 p.348). Based on Webster's (1998) definition, this research paper will favor a cultural studies approach. "Cultural studies may be loosely defined as the multidisciplinary study of culture across various social strata, where culture refers to arts, knowledge, beliefs, customs, practices, and norms of social interaction" (Hardy, 2014, p.17). In the case of television and streaming media audiences, the cultural study approach would help to understand to what extent the audience can play a key role in the football industry.

The digitalization of media content contributed to the development of new viewing habits and practices in order to better answer news needs and desires. "Many studies on media displacement assume that when a new medium is introduced to the market, audiences will redistribute their time spent consuming media and form new behaviour patterns (Lee & Lee, 2015; Nam & Barnett, 2010; mentioned by Medina et al., 2019 p.1763). The development of new media, as it was observed by several researchers, led to the emergence of a "new media audience" (Podara et al., 2019). With the rise of cord-cutting streaming platforms and internet-connected devices, a new demographic known as "digital natives" emerged. The digital natives are described as people born after 1994 who are evolving in a digital world (Prensky, 2001, mentioned by Podara et al., 2019 p.71). This new media audience is called "the millennials" and is aged under thirty years old (Guerrero Pérez et al., 2018; Botterill, 2015).

The digital innovations in sports broadcasting also have an influence on the watching habits of millennials regarding sports. There is a decrease in attendance to sporting events due to the increase in mediated sports consumption (Kim & Mao, 2021; Yim et al., 2020; Guerrero Pérez et al., 2018). As explained, mediated consumption implies the use of internet-connected devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. These devices are popular among millennials because they provide another way for them to manage their time when watching sports (Guerrero Pérez et al., 2018). "A growing body of research suggests that consumers tend to combine their media time with other activities, which are especially prevalent among millennium audiences (Jeong & Fishbein, 2007 mentioned by Kim & Mao, 2021 p.523)."

The consumption of football, more precisely the reason why people watch football, is a topic that has been covered in the literature (Buraimo et al., 2022; Scelles, 2017; Scelles et al., 2013). In the



French context, in particular regarding the Ligue 1, some researchers have investigated that topic and specific reasons were evoked. First, football is considered a "mass sport" in France and reinforces a sense of belonging among the viewership (Durand et al., 2010; Kim & Mao, 2021). Related to this point, Durand et al. (2010) also underlined that the French viewership is likely more interested in local championships than foreign championships (Durand et al., 2010). Besides, the uncertainty of the outcome, highlighted by Scelles (2017), is also a factor influencing the viewer's behavior. This concept was theorized as "competitive intensity" (Scelles, 2013; Scelles, 2017). It can be defined as the possibility of change in the championship. From the fans' perspective, "the importance of the different prizes matters more than the temporal horizon required to reach a prize (meaning that if one team needs one game to reach a ranking qualifying for the Champions League and two or three games to reach first position, the latter matters more for fans" (Scelles, 2017, p. 1399–1400).

Audiences have access to multiplatform football; they tend to less frequently watch football broadcast on TV. According to a report led by the LFP (Ligue de Football Professionnel), the TV audience for the 2019-2020 season, 851.000 people watched the championship on television, which is two times less than the 2008-2009 season that gathered 1.7 million viewers (Henni, 2021). The digitization of football content contributed to the decrease in television viewership because the audience tends to favor mediated sports consumption (Kim & Mao, 2021). It is a central concept that will be addressed in this master's thesis and which can be defined as the "consumption of sports through substitute outlets, including home television, online streaming, social networking, sports bars, and movie cinema, is an alternative to physical attendance (Raney 2006, Weed 2007, Fairley and Tyler 2012, mentioned by Kim & Mao, 2021, pp.515–516)". Nowadays, viewers are looking for "more al a carte entertainment offering" (Havard et al., 2021, p.2). It implies that viewers' motivations should be analyzed to understand the reason for the decrease in television viewership. Some researchers worked on the motivations of the audience to favor streaming media services over traditional broadcasting on television (Kim & Mao, 2021; Sathya & Murughesh, 2020).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 1. Presentation of the chosen method: in-depth interviewing

To collect data for this research paper, the method selected is the in-depth interview, which belongs to the qualitative method category. This method is described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Webb & Webb, 1932 p.130, mentioned by Legard et al., 2003 p.139). Nevertheless, it is important to qualify this definition because this "conversation" is not a regular conversation but should be "naturalistic" and resemble "an everyday conversation" (Legard et al., 2003 p.139) in which the purpose is to understand the perspective of an interviewee. This method seems to be the most suitable for the topic of this research. Indeed, since this study focuses on the audience perception of the arrival of Prime Video as the leading distributor of the Ligue 1, it turned out that this method is the most adequate to favor. Besides, in-depth interviews will contribute to including different meaningful perspectives on the topic from the interviewees (Dearnley, 2005).

Conducting semi-structured interviews offers the possibility to bring depth to the addressed topics by facilitating the emergence of new concepts (Dearnley, 2005, p.22). It echoes the metaphor of the "window" mentioned by Rabionet (2011, p.563). It relates to the fact that people have "many stories" to tell and are "learning to share" (Rabionet, 2011 p.563). Therefore, semi-conducted interviews would help me to "grasp and articulate the multiple views, perspectives on, and meanings of some activity, event, place, or cultural object" (Johnson, 2001). Conducting interviews would contribute to confirming or refuting the assumptions that I could have made before starting working on this topic and conducting interviews (Johnson, 2001). In effect, as a football consumer and as a researcher, I have my own perception of the topic and predefined opinions about consumer behavior and the development of streaming platforms in the sports industry.

At first sight, researchers are perceived as having a biased opinion and perspective on the topic on which they are working. Nevertheless, this approach must be qualified (Diefenbach, 2008). "Science in general is a human endeavour and one cannot have ideas, assumptions, theories, and formulas without the human factor" (Diefenbach, 2008, p.876). This quote from Diefenbach (2008) illustrates the process of research and that it is based on assumptions that permit frameworks and theories to be set. In the case of this master's thesis, the topic addressed is research based on the assumption that I can have as a consumer, but conducting in-depth interviews will help me expand my research and perceptions of this topic. "Creativity and invention, science and social science are not possible without subjectivity" (Diefenbach, 2008 p.876). Nevertheless, it is necessary to not forget that social sciences are more subject to being influenced positively or negatively by subjectivity. It is for this reason that interviewing people with different backgrounds and experiencing this shift in the French football industry would represent a

significant asset. Hence, it is necessary to understand the motives and opinions of French consumers about the offer proposed by Prime Video to watch the championship and whether they will be ready to pay an extra subscription to get access to football games and the content associated with it.

## **2. Interview guide**

By selecting in-depth interviews as the leading method to collect data for this master's thesis, it is necessary to propose an interview guide. I chose this method to help organize the questions I will ask the interviewees. The method is suitable for small groups (Adams, 2015). In the case of this thesis, I interviewed thirteen people. This point raises the question of saturation, which can be defined as "the point in data collection when no additional issues or insights emerge from data and all relevant conceptual categories have been identified, explored, and exhausted" (Hennink et al., 2016 p.592). In the case of in-depth interviews, there is a moment where the point of saturation is reached because a consensus appears (Guest et al., 2006). The concept of consensus is based on the consensus theory, which relies "on the principle that experts tend to agree more with each other (with respect to their particular domain of expertise)" (Guest et al., 2006 p.74). Because interviewees have a certain expertise in the conducted inquiry by sharing their experiences and opinions. These experiences contain "truths" shared by numerous participants (Guest et al., 2006). Ergo, the possibility to limit the number of interviews between thirteen and fifteen in order to reach the point of saturation and provide conditions that favored the emergence of a consensus.

Moreover, I favored the semi-structured interview method because it enables us to create and encourage reciprocity between the interviewee and the interviewer (Galletta, 2012, mentioned by Kallio et al., 2016 p.2955). It can be defined as "a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions (Longhurst, 2003, p.143)". Ergo, semi-structured interviews are the most suitable to ask open-ended questions to a respondent (Adams, 2015, p.367). Indeed, in-depth interviews allow you to ask "thought-through questions and follow [an interview] through active, reflective listening" (Brounéus, 2011, p.130). Semi-structured interview guidelines are the most meaningful method to use. It offers the possibility to "improvise follow-up questions based on participants' responses" (Hardonet et al., 2004; Rubin & Rubin 2005; Polit & Beck 2010 mentioned by Kallio et al., 2016). Thanks to this approach, a researcher encourages interviewees to share their "independent thoughts" (Adams, 2015 p.367). Furthermore, the interviewee can feel free to lead their reflections without being too directed and influenced by the researcher. The main objective is to guide the respondent by addressing the main topics of the research (Gillet et al., 2008; mentioned by Kallio et al., 2016).

Furthermore, because this inquiry aims at understanding the viewing habits of an audience, semi-conducted interviews enable the researcher to address topics that the interviewees have low awareness

of (Kallio et al., 2016). Also, this method permits us to seize more effectively the perspectives and behaviors of the audience (Johnson, 2001; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; mentioned by Berry, 1999). Thanks to semi-structured interviews, it is possible to "focus on the issues that were meaningful for the participant, allowing diverse perceptions to be expressed" (Cridland et al., 2015; mentioned by Kallio et al., 2016). To ensure a broader scope of action during the interview and have the possibility to adapt my questions depending on the interviewee, omissions will be made deliberately (Millwood & Heath, 2000). Making omissions permits you to add more questions if needed during an interview. Also, it helps to fluidify the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee by preventing any barriers of communication or misunderstanding (Millwood & Heath, 2000). Indeed, "the language and explanation of questions can easily be made appropriate to the individual subject (Millwood & Heath, 2000 p. 26)."

Although semi-structured interviews offer more flexibility to the researcher, it is essential to determine key notions that are the cornerstones of the interview guide (Adams & Cox, 2008). According to Adams & Cox (2008), these key points "should flow from the discussion rather than being forced on the interviewee" (Adams & Cox, 2008 p.22). For this reason, the main topics that will be addressed during the interviews are overall sports media consumption, football consumption, the impact of Prime Video on the interviewee's viewing habits, and illegal streaming practices. To avoid approximative and unprecise questions, each core topic will be supported by literature (Kallio et al., 2016).

Furthermore, before starting the interview, it is important to agree with the interviewee on the place where the interview will take place. In the case of this research, the question of conducting interviews online or in-person arises because the target audience is located in France. I would prioritize in-person interviews over online interviews because it would help to facilitate the conversation with the respondent. Yet, online interviews can be favored in the event of schedule issues or because the target audience is geographically dispersed (Salmons, 2012). Besides, online interviews enable an interviewee to be interviewed in more convenient conditions because they offer flexibility (Janghorban et al., 2014). This flexibility can contribute to an increase in participation from the interviewee (Janghorban et al., 2014). On the researcher side, online interviews have a couple of advantages, such as cheapness (Gruber et al., 2008). They do not require you to schedule travel, which can be expensive. Another advantage to mention with online interviews is the treatment of data and transcription. Thanks to the internet, it is possible to directly use software that generates automatic transcriptions (Gruber et al., 2008) and, by extension, reduces the time spent on data analysis.

Due to the fact that interviewing people implies entering into people's lives, some ethical issues impact different stages of the interview process (Kvale, 2011; Rabionet, 2011). An interview is a "moral enterprise" (Kvale, 2011 p.23) based on a human interaction that affects the interviewee and the following knowledge that comes from an interview inquiry. Regarding ethics and morals, interviewing

is a process based on "researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena" (Mauthner et al., 2002, p. 1, mentioned by Kvale, 2011 p.23). In the conduct of an interview, either semi-structured or guided, the questions of confidentiality, privacy, and consent are essential to take into consideration (Kvale, 2011; Dearnley, 2005).

Regarding privacy, there is a "danger of voyeurism" (Allmark et al., 2009). The "danger of voyeurism" mentioned by Allmark et al. (2009) is a process consisting of focusing only on the most "sensational" aspects of a topic. This can have a decisive impact on the treatment and approach of addressed topics and the quality of the interview by encouraging or even forcing a researcher to mention topics that an interviewee wants to keep private (Allmark et al., 2009; Dearnley, 2005). Proceeding this way is a form of non-respect and an attempt to manipulate an interviewee, which goes against the moral and is an ethical problem (Dearnley, 2005 p. 20). Ethical issues can also arise during the post-interview steps, which are the transcription, the analysis of data, and their report. For instance, the transcription must be loyal as much as possible to an interviewee's words (Kvale, 2011).

Credibility is another issue in data collection. Interviews are an established way to collect data in the case of qualitative analysis. The reliability and credibility of the data and the analysis can be challenged by interviews (Barriball & While, 1994) because in-depth interviews are based on interviewees' answers. Based on the observations made by Barriball and While (1994), the quality of the questions asked has a determining role in the reliability and credibility of the data collected through the interviewing process. Standardized questions enable one "[to] be sure that any differences in the answers are due to differences among the respondents rather than in the questions asked (Barriball & While, 1994 p.330)". Because interviewees may use different words to express their point of view and analysis, the convergence of equivalent meaning is the most important factor in ensuring the credibility and reliability of an analysis (Denzin, 1989; Barriball & While, 1994).

### **3. Operationalization**

This research aims to comprehend how the use of video streaming services to watch sports can potentially impact the viewing habits of the viewers. To illustrate this transformation, a case study about football in the French context has been carried out. The "Netflix-ication" of the sports industry (Hutchins et al., 2019; Lindholm, 2019) has been occurring in many countries outside of Europe (in America and Asia mostly) for other sports than football (Hutchins et al., 2019). For instance, Amazon Prime Video teamed up with the NBA to create the NBA League Pass, which is promoted in North Korea, Iran, and Cuba (Hutchins et al., 2019). This process of developing offers via OTT streaming platforms is mostly used to promote a national or regional championship abroad. Defining OTT streaming platforms or over-

the-top streaming services represents a challenge in the literature because researchers have various points of view on the question (Mulla, 2022). Nevertheless, the US Federal Communication Commission proposed the following definition: "an OTT is defined as an online video distributor that delivers video programming content to consumers over the Internet" (Mulla, 2022 p.3)

In European countries, streaming platforms are also used, but they are less developed than in the US. For instance, this process of "Netflix-ication" is also occurring with the development of the English OTT streaming service, DAZN, which aims to be the "Netflix of sports" by proposing on-demand live-sports events. The service has already purchased the broadcasting rights of the Serie A (the Italian football Premier League) and the Champions League (Feuerstein & Madelaine, 2022). In the French context, the use of OTT services to watch live sports is not yet popular, but it started to gain influence after the broadcasting crisis provoked by the Chinese-Spanish media group, Mediapro, in the broadcasting of the French football Premier League, the Ligue 1. After the crisis, Amazon Prime Video bought the distribution rights of the competition and has become the primary distributor of the football championship from 2021 until 2024 (Jacquot, 2021).

### *3.1. Objectives of the research*

The "Netflix-ication" of football in France, as stated in the introduction, is a transformation that has disrupted the existing broadcasting allowance system among the many distributors. It also affects the viewers who pay subscription programs to watch the tournament. That is why the focus of this research is to gather and analyze audience feedback in order to better understand if the advent of Prime Video as the official distributor of Ligue 1 in parallel with the debut of the Ligue 1 Pass has resulted in a shift in viewing patterns. In-depth semi-conducted interviews were conducted to accomplish this. This qualitative research approach encourages "people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences" (Milena et al., 2008 p. 1279). It offers the opportunity to directly ask the viewers and collect relevant data for this research paper.

### *3.2. Description of the target audience*

A maximum of fifteen people can be interviewed based on the required criteria according to the writing guide provided by the faculty. After managing to contact several people, thirteen people were interviewed. Before going further in explaining the getting-interviewees process, it is essential to describe the target sample interviewed for this project. A specific target audience has been identified based on the findings in the literature. In addition, it is crucial to mention the newness of the object of research, which limits the possibility of finding a large amount of data to corroborate and justify my choices. Because TV is the main channel used to broadcast live sports events (Durand et al., 2010; Adalian, 2020; mentioned by Havard et al., 2021), different types of users can be observed. The "couch potato" viewer is one of these types (Johnsen & Solvoll, 2007). Because of the shift from "traditional"

TV football to multiplatform football, the audience is getting younger (Budzinski et al., 2019; Medina et al., 2019). "OTT first-timer choice is formed by the combination of young householders in the lowest income segments" (Banerjee et al., 2014, p. 65, mentioned by Medina & al., 2019 p.1764)". The content has become hybrid and is not only focusing on football but also on e-sports that we can find online on YouTube or Twitch, for instance. "All age groups, but especially young sports fans, use online options" (Budzinski et al., 2019 p.11).

According to a study led by Budzinski, Lindstädt-Dreusicke, and Gaenssle (2019), it is possible to observe that TV and streaming consumers are aged between 20 and 29 years old. Even if the percentage of people consuming sports on TV is higher, there is a slight difference between those consuming sports on streaming platforms. That is why, on the occasion of in-depth interviews, interviewing people from this age group seems meaningful. Besides, to corroborate this choice, the study led by Kwak et al. (2021) in several countries, France included, allows us to underline that, in general, OTT users are males aged under 30 years old (Kwak et al., 2021 p.5). The observation made by Kwak et al. (2021) is corroborated by other observations realized in 2019 by Medina et al. (2019) and Banerjee et al. (2013) by explaining that video cord-cutting service users are "younger consumers that live independently or in new households, as well as low-income consumers looking to avoid the high cost of subscribing to traditional packaged or multi-tiered television services" (Banerjee et al., 2013, p.20).

### *3.3. Casting interviewees process*

The target audience selected for the interviews is men and women belonging to the age group called "The Millennials." So, they are aged 20-29, living in France and watching the Ligue 1. In the case of this research, thirteen people were interviewed. Qualitative research focuses on a smaller part of the overall population (Sauvayre, 2013). "A less extensive sample is needed with participants holding characteristics that are highly specific for the study aim" (Malterud et al., 2016 p. 1755). Thus, quality prevails over quantity (Sauvayre, 2013 p.27).

Finding interviewees is a time-consuming process that demands perseverance (Sauvayre, 2013). The methods utilized to cast them differ depending on the kind of people needed to conduct interviews. Among these methods, there is the snowball effect coming from phoning people previously found in a phone book or the intervention of an intermediary to put them in contact with the people needed to conduct the interviews. A researcher can also use social media to find a specific population (Sauvayre, 2013). The interviewees were found in two ways: through networks and through social media. These two methods are based on the so-called "Snowball effect." The "snowball effect" is sometimes referred to as "snowball or chain" sampling (Noy, 2008). It "relies on and partakes in the dynamics of natural and organic social networks" (Noy, 2008, p.329). Snowball sampling is a sampling method in which the

researcher contacts informants using the contact information given by previous informants (Noy, 2008 p.330). Five of the thirteen interviewees were from my personal network, two were from snowball sampling, and six people were found via Instagram. I contacted a YouTube football channel named *Remontada* on Instagram, who agreed to share my appeal in their story.

It is necessary to underline that the sample interviewed was composed of men aged between 20 and 28 years old, located in different regions of France. I did not find any women to interview. This observation allows us to better understand that the majority of championship viewers are men (Gressien, 2018), and it corroborates the previously mentioned observations about streaming platform users. Therefore, thirteen men were interviewed for this research. The interviews were conducted online because the target sample was located in different locations in France, and I was not able to meet them in person. For this reason, online interviewing was favored. The advantages and challenges of conducting online in-depth interviews were explained earlier in the part dealing with methodology (cf. p. 10).

#### *3.4. Conducting the interviews*

As explained earlier, the interviews were conducted via Zoom for practical reasons. They lasted between 40 minutes and an hour and a half. The interviews were aimed at getting spontaneous and sincere opinions and reactions from the interviewees. Therefore, despite these interviews being conducted online, I tried to put them in the most comfortable position to create a safe space (Guest et al., 2013; Longhurst, 2016). Besides, it is important to underline that all the thirteen interviewees were pleased to discuss the topic because it was a topic that interested them and about which they felt comfortable talking about. During the interviews, the respondents were asked about their consent to be recorded and the use of their words for further analysis. Also, after getting their consent orally, the interviewees were asked to sign the consent form provided by the faculty.

While conducting in-depth interviews, consent from the interviewee has to be secured. Consent can take two different forms: "it may be oral or written" (Brounéus, 2011 p.144). Notwithstanding, it is necessary to keep in mind that "the essence [of consent] is always roughly the same: [...] to ensure interviewees that their participation is completely voluntary and that they can withdraw from the project at any time should they no longer wish to participate" (Brounéus, 2011 p.144). In the literature, many authors recommend that researchers provide the interviewees with detailed information about the nature of the study carried out (Allmark et al., 2009). This information includes the purpose of the conducted research, the questions that will be asked, and how the data will be used (Allmark et al., 2009; Brounéus, 2011). In the case of this paper, consent was asked orally before starting the interviews, and to fully secure it, a consent form was emailed to the interviewees.



All the interviews were recorded via Zoom and, thanks to a tape recorder, to ensure any details or elements would have been overlooked (Kvale, 2007). Besides, a few notes were taken to avoid distracting the respondent and interrupting the flow of the conversation (Kvale, 2007 p.93). Active listening was one of the most significant stakes of this process of interviewing. Because semi-conducted interviewing has been favored, it is crucial to pay attention to the interviewees' words to be able to ask questions based on what has been said during the interview (Dearnley, 2005; Kvale, 2007). After carrying out the interviews, it is required to transcribe them, which means putting "an oral to a written mode" (Kvale, 2007 p. 94). Transcribing permits a researcher to study recordings in detail (Bailey, J, 2008). The interviews were transcribed in two ways: by hand and thanks to software.

### *3.5. Transcription*

I did not ask for services from another person to be able to seize all the details and features of the conducted interviews. Indeed, by transcribing by myself, I was able to "secure the many details relevant to their specific analysis" (Kvale, 2007 p. 95). However, it is essential to mention this information: "qualitative research is characterized by vast amounts of data in forms such as transcribed recordings of interviews or focus groups, field notes, or diary entries" (Cope, 2014, p.322). Indeed, since the interviews represented large amounts of interview material (at least 20 to 30 pages), I decided to use a voice recognition software called Trint. This software allows the uploading of an audio or video file, and the file in question is transcribed with the help of artificial intelligence. This software allows you to create a draft of a transcription. The options proposed on the website give the opportunity to edit the draft by listening to the audio or video file as many times as possible to correct potential mistakes.

Transcribing is a task that requires patience, time, and physical skills. "The whole process of doing the transcription is lonely and tiring" (Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003, p. 657, mentioned by Matheson, 2015, p. 548). Thanks to the technological advancements in data collection and transcription, artificial intelligence enables a researcher to save time in transcription (Matheson, 2015). Although transcription software saves time, the researcher still must review and edit the transcript to be sure to get all the information needed to proceed to data analysis. Optimal use of the equipment is essential to collect data.

As explained earlier, transcription is a time-consuming activity when a high volume of recorded data is involved. The use of software is not completely accurate, therefore "when high quality transcriptions are needed, a human transcriber is required to verify and correct the (imperfect) system's transcriptions" (Rodríguez et al., 2007 p.242). For this reason, I reviewed and edited the transcription created by the program that I used. There is a collaboration between technology and human knowledge to generate a final transcription (Rodríguez et al., 2007). To illustrate this point, when I transcribed the interviews, some of the interviewees were friends of mine, and we used expressions particular to us that

the software could not identify. From this example, we can see that human intervention is still necessary for the transcription process and that a researcher cannot completely rely on a program.

### *3.6. Challenges*

Interviewing to collect data raises several challenges. Many research students can think that interviewing is the 'easiest' way to collect data. However, it does not only rely on having a conversation with someone (Mears, 2012). In my case, I had this assumption, and initially, I wanted to combine two methods to collect data (surveys and in-depth interviews). Notwithstanding, after further discussions with my supervisor, it was agreed that I would only focus on in-depth interviews. In the beginning, I must acknowledge that I underestimated the workload behind the process of interviewing people. It requires "patience, demands considerable time and energy, and involves coordinating your schedule with the busy calendars of others" (Mears, 2012, p.24). Finding interviewees, scheduling the interviews, and transcribing and analyzing the data are time-consuming steps.

The most challenging tasks were finding interviewees. Getting interviewees is a process that requires rigor and perseverance. It is not always easy to get access to a specific population or to get their agreement to take part in research (Sauvayre, 2013). It is necessary to keep in mind that someone can refuse to be interviewed for various motives or can agree to help and not give news later in the process. Besides, it is possible to face a lack of response and reactivity from the people previously solicited. All these cases occurred while working on this thesis. A friend of mine refused to be interviewed because he was not comfortable with the idea. Another example was that after sharing an appeal for witnesses on Instagram, someone was interested in being interviewed and did not give news about their participation.

Moreover, "the process [of writing a thesis] requires discipline, independent initiative, creative thinking, working with others, and the surmounting of self-doubt" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007 p.9, mentioned by Sadeghi & Shirzad Khajepasha, 2015 p. 357). Discipline was one of the most challenging aspects of conducting the interviews and working on the thesis because there were periods during which I was less invested. For instance, the getting-interviewee process was laborious, which was slow and required patience. I sent many emails and tried to contact many people via social media and got a few answers. During this period, I experienced doubt and questioned myself if I was going in the right direction and about the pertinence of my topic. The guidance of my supervisor and his advice helped me to refocus on my work.

## 4. RESULTS

Based on the data collected from the conducted interviews, three main themes were underlined. From the interviews, it was noted that several topics and practices were addressed by the majority of the interviewees and that there are clear differences of opinions about the use of the Pass Ligue 1 and the price attached to it. These three core themes that have been brought up are sports and football consumption, then the viewing habits of the interviewees, and finally, the “Netflix-ication of sports broadcasting” (Lindholm, 2019). All these themes echo findings in literature and are not specific to the French context but a change on a global scale in the viewing habits of the audience due to the progressive positioning of OTT streaming platforms such as Amazon Prime Video or DAZN as leading distributors of the main sporting competitions (Alcolea-Díaz & García-Santamaría, 2019; Hutchins et al., 2019; Koutroumanides et al., 2019a, Koutroumanides et al., 2019b).

### 1. Sports consumption

#### *1.1. Driving factors*

From the data collected, it is possible to notice that sports consumption is a personal practice (Kim & Mao, 2021) and that each interviewee has a different relationship with football and sports consumption in general. Nine interviewees declared they consume sports content daily, whereas the three remaining interviewees explained they enjoy watching live sports for important competitions such as the Olympic Games, the Champions League, or the Worldwide Football Cup. The driving factors of live sports consumption are significant elements to take into account to understand why some people would prefer a pay subscription for the Pass Ligue 1 proposed by Amazon Prime. The reasons why people watch football and live sports are varied and intrapersonal (James & Ross, 2004). These reasons may include the aesthetics of a game or championship, drama and suspense, entertainment, social interaction, and economic reasons (James & Ross, 2004).

All these factors were evoked by the interviewees. First of all, it is essential to mention the accessibility of football and the Ligue 1, which is a key driving factor for consuming football content. Football is a mass sport that gathers large audiences, and the technological innovations in broadcasting allow people to watch live sports events from their homes (Durand et al., 2010). The thirteen interviewees agreed on the fact that they consume football and other sports when important events are broadcast. *An interviewee declared:*

*"I prefer watching football during the World Cup more than in the Ligue 1 or other championships." I also like watching handball; it's nice to watch, but I'd say football and handball, but the Football World Cup is at the top of my list." (Paul)*

As exposed during the interviews, whether it is the local championship or the World Cup, all thirteen interviewees underlined the desire to support the national team during international events or the local championship. It echoes the notion of patriotism developed by Nüesch & Franck (2009) when they studied the correlation between TV audiences for national teams during international sporting events and patriotism. For example, the thirteen interviewees declared they were watching the Ligue 1 because "it's the local championship." This point is interesting to underscore because "patriotism" concerns "an affective attachment towards the in-group implying feelings of belongingness, responsibility, and pride" (Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001, p. 160, mentioned by Nüesch & Franck, 2009 p.8). This feeling of patriotism in sports is part of the process of identification and helps to foster the sense of belonging of the viewers (Kim & Mao, 2021).

All thirteen interviewees admitted watching games of the Ligue 1. However, it was interesting to observe that the quality of the games, the competitive balance, and the level were topics about which there was no agreement. Three interviewees declared themselves disappointed about the lack of competitive balance because of the dominance of the PSG. It relies upon the notion of "competitive balance" that was defined by Scelles et al. (2013). The concept of "competitive balance" can be defined as "the necessity of equilibrium between the teams in a league in order to guarantee uncertainty of outcome and thus generate public demand (Scelles et al., 2013 p. 4185)".

*"Initially, I have to admit that the team I'm supporting is French. Therefore, I'll watch the Ligue 1 first. But in comparison to other championships, the Ligue 1 is not the best [in terms of quality]." (Damien)*

The lack of uncertainty within a championship is one of the key driving factors that can encourage a football fan to follow or not follow a competition. Since the hegemony of the PSG at the top of the overall ranking, there has been a lack of uncertainty within the competition (Arrondel & Duhautois, 2020). It was for this reason that seven interviewees evoked the fact they could watch other European football championships, such as the PL in England, the Liga in Spain, or the Bundesliga in Germany. It is necessary to mention that the Ligue 1 is considered one of the five best European football championships, along with the Serie A (the Italian championship) and the three others mentioned in the previous sentence (cf. Appendix 3).

For that reason, some of the interviewees declared that the Ligue 1 is a championship with a good game level. It reflects the notion of "game quality" that can be defined by several inputs. "The

quality of the game is higher, the more grace and skill with which it is produced, the larger the number of instances of extraordinary physical achievement that appears in it, and the more uncertain its outcome" (Rottenburg, 2000 p.11 mentioned by Nüesch & Franck, 2009 p.8)".

*"People will think that when you watch [the Ligue 1], it's less intense than in the Premier League or other foreign championships. However, I think that [the Ligue 1] is a good quality championship. We can observe it with the arrival of great players, except for Messi, or the players bought by PSG. Teams are getting even stronger, and we see more and more good players becoming visible in Lyon or Marseille. There are good quality players everywhere."* (Antoine)

Game quality is also linked with the notion of aesthetics mentioned above. In effect, in sports, and football mostly, aesthetics plays an important role in the appreciation of a game (Nüesch & Franck, 2009). There is a certain form of art that can be found in football (Mumford, 2011; mentioned by Borge, 2011) in the skills of a player or the strategies put in place by a coach. Tactics are also essential because the audience can react to the offensive or defensive choices of a coach (Feddersen & Rott, 2011). A positive acceptance of a coach's strategy and tactics can positively impact the viewing demand of an audience. One of the interviewees explained that the strategic aspect of football encourages him to watch the Ligue 1 because he is playing a video game called *Mon Petit Gazon* which consists of selecting players based on their actual statistics in the championship to line a team up and play games.

*"Mon petit gazon helped me to be more interested in the Ligue 1, in a sense that I'm starting to be interested in players that I didn't necessarily know, but I had to choose because they were the last available for my team. Consequently, I've started to be interested in statistics, and sometimes it motivates me to watch games because of this".* (Baptiste)

The social aspect of football is another driving factor that has to be considered (Kim & Mao, 2021; Nüesch & Franck, 2009). As it was explained by twelve interviewees, watching football is a leisure activity that implies interacting with other people. Indeed, sports are used as a "means for everyday life" (Kim & Mao, 2021, p.526). For example, one of the interviewees explained that in his family he was the only one watching the Ligue 1 and football in general. Thus, he turns himself over to his friends to discuss his passion, and he evokes the important role of teasing. Teasing can be defined as "mocking but playful jibes against someone" (Haugh, 2010 mentioned by Adetunji, 2013 p.149).

*"I have friends who are supporting other clubs. Therefore, teasing is necessary. One day your friend's club did great, but the day after it could be lame during a game. There's something unique and social about teasing. Sports are just an excuse."* (Robin, L)

*“I watch the championship because of Paris, that’s all, but I also watch Marseille and tease my friends when the team loses. There are many topics on which we can tease each other”.*  
(Thenesh)

In addition to teasing, the interviewees explained that they could enjoy watching with other people to socialize (Kim & Mao, 2021). This experience of mediated football consumption does not only take place at home but also in public spaces such as bars or restaurants. For example, three interviewees declared that they were organizing viewing sessions at their houses, whereas two others explained that they preferred going out to meet their friends. As it was explained by one of them, *“exchanging with his friends is something that he likes too. The convivial aspect is very important. He always tries to watch a game with his friends”* (Thenesh). Another interviewee stated that he organizes events on purpose to watch football with other people. *He declared:*

*“On Sunday at 3 pm, it’s a tradition to watch a game. I’ve got friends supporting Angers and others supporting Clermont. Therefore, on Sunday, [we watch] the multiplex at 3 pm at my place. Sometimes people are coming or not.”* (Antoine)

### *1.2. Means of consumption*

The aforementioned elements help to understand why people watch live football and live sports in general. The social aspect remains a key element in encouraging people to consume live football. It enables us to focus on another core topic related to sports consumption, which is the viewing experience of the fans. Due to the development of the internet, sports broadcasting has to deal with significant changes in people’s viewing habits (Medina et al., 2019). "The technological development allows for streaming video over the internet on a large scale. This particularly consists of an infrastructure development that provides a larger portion of the world’s population with high-speed internet access (Lindholm, 2019, p.100)". It offers the opportunity to adopt a mediated sports consumption style, which consists of consuming sports media on various devices (Kim & Mao, 2021).

It is possible to observe that the interviewees use several devices to watch live football. These reasons depend on the situation in which the interviewees are. The thirteen people interviewed declared watching the Ligue 1 and other live football events on their computers, smartphones, televisions, or game consoles (Sathya & Muruges, 2020; Medina et al., 2019). The choice of device will depend on various factors, such as the budget, the living conditions, or the moment when an interviewee will watch a football game. The question related to practicality and comfort were the two main reasons given by the interviewees. As underlined by Kim & Mao (2021), television and football have a "symbiotic relationship" (p.516) because, as explained in the theoretical framework, football represents a must-have

for TV channels (Durand et al., 2010). For this reason, television remains one of the most used devices because it is easy to access and provides a complete experience for the viewer. As it was mentioned by an interviewee, if he had to make an order of preferences, he would say TV, laptop, and smartphone.

Nevertheless, laptops are also favored by the interviewees because of their practicality and affordability. A television represents a certain amount of money, and the people interviewed do not have a systematic budget to invest in electronic devices. Damien's words perfectly illustrate this observation. *He declared:*

*"I'll watch on my laptop [...] because in my room I don't have a television. Anyway, I don't watch TV. I'm mostly using my laptop because all the apps (Amazon, etc.) are available on my computer and my phone. That's why I watch a few things on my smartphone". (Damien)*

The accessibility and the rapidity evoked by one of the interviewees underscore an aspect of the concept of "mediated sports consumption," according to which mediated sports consumption offers the possibility to watch several games at the same time. "Avid sports fans like to simultaneously follow many sports. They consider multi-game access is an indispensable part of contemporary sports consumption experience (Kim & Mao, 2021, p.523)". However, it is necessary to understand that multiplatform live broadcasting also offers the possibility for a viewer to reallocate their time differently by focusing on another activity while a game is broadcast.

*"I don't mind zapping, finding a game I'm not particularly interested in, and switching to another channel or doing something else at the same time. Or it happens that I keep it as background noise. If it's a championship, I don't follow it closely. I just want to see how the team is coping". (Benajmin)*

Regarding this point, it depends on the preferences of each interviewee and the stakes associated with the game that they are watching. Previous research about this point was used to emphasize a potential abandonment of television in favor of cord-cutting devices (laptops, tablets, and smartphones) (Boehmer, 2016). However, it is possible to observe a hybridization of the devices used by the audience.

## **2. Viewing experience**

### *2.1. Illegal streaming use*

This hybridization of the devices used by the audience also implies the role of social media, which is also crucial in the viewing habits of the audience because they offer interaction with other people and quick information about the outcomes of a game, as well as current affairs in the sports industry

(Boehmer, 2016; Kim & Mao, 2021). Two interviewees explained using Twitter to stay informed about the results of a game or to watch snippets of the highlights of a game. Among them one said that he uses Twitter because on the social media, some people broadcast live games. Twitter is not the only social media platform that was mentioned by the interviewees. TikTok and Discord were mentioned as well for the same purposes. Indeed, on one hand, TikTok broadcasts snippets of football games. On the other hand, Discord is an interesting social media platform to use and testifies to the hybridization of the viewing practices of the audience. Discord is a social media platform that allows users to share a screen with other users connected in a chatroom. This solution permits the viewers to share one account instead of purchasing individual subscriptions. It is a P2P (peer-to-peer) option that does not require the action of a third party (Kariyawasam & Tsai, 2017).

“With my friend, we use our laptops a lot. Consequently, we have a social media called Discord that you can use to communicate via audio and share your screen. Therefore, we can broadcast live football through it. My brother pays for Prime Video and the Pass, so, he broadcasts the games even if we are not next to him. In that way, we can watch live football.” (Damien)

Viewers favor this type of practice to avoid spending large amounts of money. It permits us to focus on how the audience manages their consumption of football. Since football is an attractive sport, encrypted TV channels propose the broadcast of the Ligue 1 and other European championships in exchange for financial investment. (Durand et al., 2010; Koutroumanides, 2019b). In the case of Amazon’s OTT platform, Prime Video proposes the Pass Ligue 1, costing €12.99 per month, to get access to eight Ligue 1 games out of ten, in addition to the monthly or annual subscription to Amazon Prime, which costs €49 per year. Between the interviewees, there was no consensus about the fact of paying an extra subscription. Four interviewees had the impression that they were being stolen, whereas the eleven remaining interviewees were in favor of paying a subscription.

“To my eye, it is [the Pass Ligue 1] a scam because, clearly, Amazon has always underlined that with Amazon Prime, you have access to everything [included in the offer]. When I saw that [the Pass Ligue 1], I told myself, "Oh, great! I thought I'd get access to Ligue 1, but when I realized you had to pay 8-9 euros, or even more, honestly... I thought it was a daylight robbery.” (Théophile)

The previous quote invites us to reflect on the question of illegal streaming practices via different means. Indeed, illegal streaming includes the use of websites or sharing accounts. In live sports, piracy represents the most important issue that has to be solved (Kariyawasam & Tsai, 2017). For broadcasters, illegal streaming practices such as unauthorized rebroadcasting or account sharing impair the marketability and profitability of licensed sports broadcasts (Kariyawasam & Tsai, 2017 p.266). The reason behind the democratization of piracy and illegal streaming is mostly economic: in France,



watching sports represents a certain amount of money. Based on a study conducted by the consulting company Wavestone about the emergence of the GAFA in the French sports broadcasting market, it has been highlighted that in all competitions combined, watching football costs on average €79.90 per month for a French football fan (Deloux et al., 2019 p.5). The thirteen interviewees all agreed on that point, acknowledging that the broadcasting offer concerning the Ligue 1 is perceived as expensive.

“It’s annoying because the distributors change way too often. Now, without blaming Prime Video, because the subscription price stays affordable even if they only propose the Ligue 1. However, when you see all the subscriptions you need to have to watch the championship, you need Eurosport to watch the Coupe de France, for example. And then, you need Canal+ or RMC Sport to watch some games of the Champions League. It’s aberrant! In fact, those recurrent changes in distributors force us to put some money up, if I can say that. Because of that, we could be constrained to using illegal streaming.” (Antoine)

The fees associated with the services provided by the TV channels (Canal+, RMC Sport, etc.) and the OTT platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix) offer premium users high-quality (4K video and high-speed content) and real-time streaming events (Jiang et al., 2018). However, when they are cumulated, they represent a significant financial investment for the viewers. Thus, many interviewees declared they were organizing with trustworthy people to share the expenses. Most of the time, the people mentioned were family members or close friends.

“So, my brother pays the subscription, but because we’re twins, we watch everything together. Therefore, we watch the same things at the same time. [...] In fact, from my perspective, sharing just means I do it with trustworthy people. In a way, even if you don’t give money for the subscription, you can pay back with something else. It’s how I picture things in my logic. I mean, if whatshisname or whatshername shares with me their account, I’ll return the favor. But, if someone or something forbids me to do it, I won’t look for a device [IPTV] or nitpick to watch sports or something. No, it’s not my problem, not my thing.” (Damien)

“Given that I share it with my whole family. In fact, everyone is paying something, if you get what I mean. Beyond watching sports, my sister is paying for Netflix, my parents are paying for Canal+, and I’m paying for Amazon Prime. In that way, we have access to many channels at the same time. I have to admit that without account sharing, in the future, it will represent a significant budget if broadcasting rights stay like this. I know in ten years, if I have a family, it will represent a lot of expenses, and it’s true that’s not a priority. Why not save money now? Nowadays, I can limit my expenses. Therefore, I prefer paying a higher price for quality service and having a reliable live direct broadcast.” (Antoine)

These two previous testimonies enable us to better understand the motivations of a viewer to opt for this kind of method. Nevertheless, it is important to underscore that the interviewees are aware that this practice is not legal and consider purchasing their own subscriptions when they will have higher revenues. Indeed, it is essential to keep in mind that twelve out of thirteen interviewees were aged between 20 and 25 years old. So, they do not necessarily have stable income to purchase subscriptions to Prime Video or other TV channels to watch the Ligue 1. It confirms the observations made by several researchers (Kim & Mao, 2021; Sathya & Murugesh, 2020; Budzinsk et al., 2019), according to which millennials are the most numerous users of streaming in all its shapes. Moreover, it is interesting to see that one interviewee does not consider the use of illegal streaming illegal. As an example, Théophile stated that streaming practices are not illegal for a viewer. Streaming is illegal for the distributor, but he did not think it was illegal for the viewer. This quote enables us to better understand why some viewers use illegal streaming access over legal options. There is a lack of awareness about the practice and its consequences.

Nevertheless, two interviewees acknowledged being fully aware of the illegal aspect and that they do not pay any fee to watch the Ligue 1 and other European football championships. They favor the use of "unicast streaming, where material is saved on a server and made available to users on a website (Kariyawasam & Tsai, 2017)." The motives exposed by the interviewees were, first, all the free access. Second, the easiness of access; and finally, using illegal streaming has become common practice for them. For example, Robin C. explained that he does not want to invest his money in TV channel subscriptions and the Pass Ligue 1 as long as he can find other ways to watch football for free.

“Personally, no, I’ve always watched football illegally, if I can say that. I’ve always found streaming websites to watch the games of the Ligue 1. I never had a pay subscription. When it comes to Canal+ or Amazon, in general, there is always a streaming website that broadcasts the championship as well.” (Baptiste)

He also evoked the fact that he was a minor when he started to watch football, and to avoid asking a third party to pay a subscription to watch the different championships, he found illegal streaming as a solution to his problem.

“I was quite young; I was a minor when I started wanting to watch football games, and it was at that time some friends of mine talked to me about this solution [illegal streaming]. I haven’t considered asking my parents to pay for a subscription anyway. Because I was too young to afford it on my own, this solution was the easiest one. Over time, this habit has stayed. I can do it [illegal streaming] freely with few constraints, even when I’ve started to be more independent and make my own money. I’ve never really thought about purchasing a subscription because it has been working that way since then.” (Baptiste)

The observations about illegal streaming practices must be qualified because eight interviewees agreed on the fact that illegal streaming is a convenient way to avoid expenses due to the prices of the subscription programs, but they admitted that they have few options to limit their expenses to watch the championship. Indeed, the distribution crisis that occurred in France regarding the Ligue 1 after Mediapro's withdrawal forced a majority of them to favor illegal streaming. After all, the price proposed by Mediapro's channel Téléfoot was perceived as too expensive. Indeed, Téléfoot, provided by the Spanish-Chinese media, cost €25 per month and only proposed the Ligue 1 (Belin, 2021). Téléfoot was the first attempt to offer a service solely dedicated to Ligue 1, but it caused a disequilibrium in the broadcasting rights market because the service offered was too expensive for viewers. For instance, Corentin A. explained that it was problematic for him to watch content because he did not have the money to pay Téléfoot. Consequently, he used to watch football illegally. Other testimonies related to this issue as well.

“With streaming, it was easy to find another solution. I had the impression that the Ligue 1 "disrespected" the football fans because Canal+ had the broadcasting rights for a long time and they made the wrong choice with Téléfoot. Quite simply, people were fed up. It was way too expensive, and that's why illegal streaming shot up.” (Jovan)

“About Téléfoot: I think they had a good project, but as you know, because of the price, I didn't subscribe to the channel. As a consequence, I had to stream football. Streaming is a mess because you must find a decent website, you need to delete ads, and find a good link that doesn't crash. Also, sometimes the comments are not even in French.” (Antoine)

All the thirteen interviewees agreed on the fact that it negatively impacted their viewing habits of the Ligue 1 for various reasons. First, they put under the spotlight the dangers of illegal streaming on their electronic devices. *As declared by Damien:* “Well, I take care of my PC. Therefore, I tried illegal streaming once and noticed that my PC wasn't the one I'm using now. I told myself, "It's better to stop that!". So, I'm not interested in this practice (Damien)”. The second reason evoked by the interviewees was the low quality of the links provided by unicast streaming and the ethical aspect of this practice. In effect, six interviewees insisted on the ethical aspect of watching the championship and that piracy was not the best way to "show respect" towards the service provided by the clubs, the LFP, and the players. They also emphasized the lack of comfort that illegal streaming provokes, which can negatively impact the viewing experience of football fans.

“There was a time we [Corentin and his brother] tried illegal streaming websites, but there it is, the level of the quality is not terrible and, beyond the ethical aspect that conducts piracy to be seen as "not right or whatever, quality is disgusting. There is a five-minute delay with the live. Obviously, if you surf on social media, or have results apps in real-time, you'll be spoiled five

minutes before a goal is scored, a card is given, etc. Ergo, it's not the best [option].” (Corentin G.)

Besides, it is important to note that to face piracy and illegal streaming, the French sports industry, alongside the government, is actively fighting against this practice by shutting down illegal websites. A law was passed in October 2021 to fight against the illegal broadcasting of live sporting events (Karayan, 2022). It offers the possibility for licensed sports broadcasters to shut down illegal streaming websites. This law strongly impacted the viewing habits of the viewers who adopted this means of viewing. Robin C. admitted that finding illegal streaming websites has become more difficult, but it is not a reason to stop his consumption of this type of service. He explained that the website on which he used to surf doesn't work anymore. So, he had to find another one, but as he mentioned, it is not complicated to find some websites. It is just the comments are not always in French. The use of illegal streaming websites is one of the available options for viewers to consume football.

Yet, there are other options that are also considered illegal but imply a financial contribution in exchange for the service provided. It is the case of IPTVs (Internet Protocol Televisions), which are set-top boxes that provide cheaper access to licensed content. When an individual pays for a regular subscription, they receive a set-top box to view the content. Pirates pay for a regular subscription, but use the set-top box to send digital feeds to other servers where they can on-sell the content to a broader audience at a cheaper rate (Kariyawasam & Tsai, 2017 p. 268)." Among the interviewees, two were unaware of the use of IPTV, whereas the rest declared being aware of the use of this type of device but did not consider purchasing one. One interviewee declared being a former user of IPTV.

“I had an IPTV that worked really well on which I could rely. It wasn't the one that was interrupted every five minutes. I could pay twenty-five bucks per year and get all the channels. I could watch all the games that I wanted, and it was very interesting money-wise.” (Benjamin)

However, the introduction of Prime Video as the primary distributor of Ligue 1 made it even more difficult to buy and use an IPTV because it accelerated the fight against the commercialization of IPTVs. This chase of IPTVs follows the passage of the law dating to October 20, 2021. On March 17th, 2022, the LFP manages to limit access to IPTV platforms through the intermediary of internet providers thanks to this law (Gavard, 2022). The law offers an opportunity for internet providers to block access to an IPTV platform and protect licensed broadcast distributors against piracy. One of the interviewees addressed this problem, and because of this, he decided to turn himself towards legal options, despite the fact that he shares a subscription with someone else.

“Now they [the LFP and the government] have to hunt down little by little these set-top boxes and these unscrupulous streaming practices that are not necessarily very legal. Well, yes, despite

everything, we are forced to adopt more legal solutions. What's available? A twelve-euro pass to watch all the games of the Ligue 1. When it's like that, you take it". (Benjamin)

## 2.2. *The time allowed to watch live football and the type of content consumed*

The use of illegal streaming services, as well as the various measures taken to combat this practice, has an impact on how the audience can consume live football and the Ligue 1. The introduction of the GAFA (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple) on the broadcasting rights market in France encouraged the interviewees to adapt their consumption to their needs and desires. "The cord-cutting trend canceling terrestrial cable television for more a la carte entertainment" (Adalian, 2020 mentioned by Havard et al., 2021 p.2). This entertainment "à la carte" mentioned by Havard et al. (2021) changed the habits of the interviewees because some of them declared that they purchased the Pass Ligue 1 proposed by Prime Video due to the possibility to rewatch games in replay.

"Sometimes, it's frustrating because the days of Ligue 1 are between Friday and Sunday, and the recaps are only available on Monday morning. As a result, sometimes there is a game, like a crazy one that I haven't watched on Friday, and the waiting period between Friday and Monday is quite long. Even if it's just for one day". (Samuel)

In the case of three interviewees, the replay option represents an opportunity to diversify and enhance their viewing experience coupled with stadium attendance. Four interviewees mentioned the fact that, in addition to watching live football, they subscribed to a stadium subscription. Samuel, who attends the stadium regularly, said: "*When you want to rewatch an action, replays are directly available. Right after a game, when something important happens, you can see it again. Actually, I'm not shocked to see people expecting this type of service.*" It echoes the desire to fully experience live football expressed by the interviewees and the concept of mediated sports consumption (Kim & Mao, 2021). "The emergence of alternative sports consumption platforms, such as live streaming, which do not require fans being physically present, becomes a major competitor of live attendance. (Kim & Mao, 2021, p.516)." Based on the testimonies of the interviewees, it is possible to assess that the use of an OTT streaming platform brings an added value to the viewing experience and the stadium experience.

However, in the case of fans who opt for mediated sports consumption only, this type of option is not relevant and worthwhile to pay. Indeed, an interviewee explained that because of his planning, it is difficult for him to watch the games scheduled during the weekend. It is for this reason that he favors the use of an application to receive notifications in real-time and does not see the convenience of the replay option provided by Prime Video. For example, Thenesh was concerned by this situation, and said that because he already knew the results, a replay option is not worthwhile for him.

Viewers can have complete control over the content consumed by managing their time of consumption by watching recaps or the replay of a game. This point permits us to address another topic, the type of content consumed by the interviewees and how the arrival of Prime Video influenced their consumption. As it was mentioned in Samuel's testimony, recaps are a type of content favored by the audience. As it was explained by the interviewees, they will favor the use of YouTube to watch recaps of the games played during the weekend. Damien stated: "watching YouTube for everything that concerns important games in a championship or big teams that he was unable to watch live". (Damien) The use of YouTube corroborates the observations made by Kim & Mao (2021) about the fact that "a growing body of research suggests that consumers tend to combine their media time with other activities, which are especially prevalent among millennium audiences (Jeong and Fishbein 2007 mentioned by Kim & Mao, 2021 p.523)". The gain of time and accessibility were two driving factors motivating the interviewees to use YouTube or other applications to watch recaps and highlights of a game.

"I like the fact that I can have everything instantly. When you search for the sport, you want to watch, you'll find it directly. As an example, when you search for a game between Atlético and FC Barcelona, the first thing you'll see on your screen are recaps. It works for UFC fights or basketball games between two important teams, as well. You just have to type in the name of one of two teams, and you'll find everything you want. So, yes, to my eye, YouTube is the platform that I appreciate the most because this is where I spend a lot of time watching content. It's my go-to app to stay informed." (Damien)

Furthermore, the consumption of shorter content enables us to understand the practicality linked with the development of cord-cutting streaming platforms, and it is possible to observe that it influences the time allowed to watch football. In effect, some interviewees agreed on the fact that they could be satisfied by the quality of those recaps and watch fewer entire football games. However, this observation must be qualified because all the interviewees agreed on the fact that watching a game remains a central driving factor (Kim & Mao, 2021; Koutroumanides et al., 2019a).

"I can understand why some people can be content with only watching recaps because the point is to watch the striking moments. I have no problem with that because it's true that football can be sometimes boring to watch depending on the game. But where I do have trouble understanding is when the people doing this claim that they're real supporters of a club. Through this practice, I have the impression that you are losing the supporter side". (Corentin G.)

### 3. The “Netflix-cation of sports broadcasting”

#### 3.1. *The distributors’ offer & Amazon’s strategy*

The testimonies of the interviewees were linked with the notion of "Netflix-cation of sports broadcasting" developed by Lindholm (2019). As it was exposed in the theoretical framework part, the advent of the GAFA in the sports industry started in 2016 (Hutchins et al., 2019; Koutroumanides, 2019a; Lindholm, 2019) in North America and the UK. This transition was expected to occur in France as well (Deloux et al., 2019). All the thirteen interviewees agreed on the fact that the current distribution model adopted for the Ligue 1 in France is problematic due to the large number of licensed distributors (Koutroumanides et al., 2019b). This is an issue that Corentin G. addressed by saying that if one is very passionate about football, watching all the scheduled games quickly becomes expensive. This point was also mentioned by Antoine, who stated:

“However, when you see all the subscriptions you need to have to watch the championship, you need Eurosport to watch the Coupe de France, for example. And then, you need Canal+ or RMC Sport to watch some games of the Champions League. It’s aberrant!” (Antoine)

It is for this reason that the interviewees who have subscribed to the Pass Ligue 1 acknowledged that it represents an additional cost but that it helps to centralize a bit more the distributor offers divided between Canal+, BeIn Sport, and L’Équipe 21 (for the Ligue 2) before the arrival of Prime Video and the Pass Ligue 1. As it was declared by Robin C.: “right now, he just has one subscription that he pays monthly, and it is Amazon.”

“I think nowadays, in France, a French supporter who wants to watch the Ligue 1 in priority and who doesn’t have any interest in watching the Champions’ League available on Canal+, a pass costing twelve euros to get the majority of the games of the Ligue 1, except a couple of games, Amazon Prime is more than enough.” (Benjamin)

It is important to understand that seven interviewees are interested in the Ligue 1 because they are supporting a particular club, and they might not be interested in watching less attractive games. For example, six interviewees declared being fans of one of the most important clubs in the championship, PSG, OM, and OL (cf. appendix 6). For instance, Robin L explains that his number one team is the OL because this is his childhood team. Jovan went further in his explanations about why the OM was his favorite team and said: "I’ve been a supporter of the Olympique de Marseille since I was a kid. I quiver when I watch them play. I can cry or smile because of the team. I’m very attached to it [the club]." (Jovan). The interviewees have the impression that since Prime Video holds the broadcasting rights of the most important games of the championship, the offer provided by Prime Video and the Pass Ligue 1 is worthwhile. Besides, many interviewees indicated that the failure of Mediapro and Téléfoot was

beneficial to Amazon since the quality of service provided by the Spanish-Chinese media was questionable.

It is important to underline that the “Netflix-ication” of the Ligue 1 permitted a different experience for football fans because it changed the format previously proposed by traditional TV channels. For instance, the question of advertisements was addressed by the interviewees, explaining that the Pass Ligue 1 has drastically reduced the number of ads. This point is linked to the observations made by the researchers according to which advertising represented and football represented a significant amount of money for free and private TV channels (Chaix, & Chavinier-Réla, 2015; Durand et al., 2010; Paché, N’Goala, 2011). Therefore, advertising was considered a constraint for the viewers. “On television, they have constraints because they know that they have to hand back the microphone because of an ad or because another program is about to start, etc.” (Robin L.).

The objective of OTT streaming platforms is to offer users a more personalized experience (Hutchins et al., 2019), and this personalized experience includes an immersive experience. All the interviewees, who have a subscription to the Pass Ligue 1 addressed this point. In its offer, Prime Video provides new options and formats that the interviewees appreciate. In addition to the replay option proposed, the interviewees underlined the quality of the staff working for the platform, the quality of the comments, and the new technological innovation consisting of equipping the referees with a microphone. The most striking element, as observed by the users of the Pass Ligue 1, is that the pass does not include other sports. Four interviewees complained about the format broadcast by Canal+ that deals with other topics such as the consultants' life experiences.

“When you turn Amazon on, the guys only talk about the game. Actually, they don’t talk about their lives because with Canal+, I’m fed up with the consultants' anecdotes or whatever. I don’t give a fuck! They should talk about the game instead. After the game, there is a debriefing for twenty minutes, but they really take the time to discuss each action that happened. If something incredible happens, they’ll discuss it for twenty-five minutes. But, when a game was lame, after ten or fifteen minutes they would round off. In fact, it seems anecdotal, but for me, it changes everything because you really enjoy watching your game from the beginning to the end.” (Robin L.)

Regarding the innovations in viewing proposed by Prime Video, the use of microphones on the referees was acknowledged by the interviewees.

“A lot of people were waiting for this for a long time, but I think it’s a good idea to hear what we see. It obliges the referees to be more serious in their decisions and about the way they talk. In that case, there are pieces of evidence to support it. Honestly, it’s interesting to understand



how the arbitration system works and to see why a referee goes to check the VAR and what the players say. It's very interesting. It's already done in rugby when there is a video intervention. We can hear the referee expressing what he has to say. It would assist the audience in better understanding the decisions and being more indulgent. It offers "room for debate." (Jovan)

The interviewees reached an agreement by declaring that the Pass Ligue 1 is worthwhile despite the price of the monthly fee. It is due to the quality of service, the experience provided, and the job realized by the staff. In effect, several interviewees explained that there is a difference between the quality of the comments and the commentators covering live football. The presence of former French professional football star Thierry Henry was another factor that encouraged interviewees to sign up for the Pass Ligue 1.

“They [Prime Video] have good consultants, it's true, and that can be a driving force today when you choose to get or not get the Pass. For instance, at Canal+, many consultants are leaving because they have fewer broadcasting rights than before. But, for instance, on Sunday night with the Canal Football Club, they have lost many consultants, and as a consequence, the program is less watched by the audience. Then yes, consultants and journalists, in general, can be a driving factor to watch or not watch a channel.” (Antoine)

To conclude on this point, the interviewees did not evoke problems, in particular regarding the service provided by Prime Video, and expressed their satisfaction regarding the product proposed.

“Honestly, in my case, I can't complain about it [service provided by the Pass Ligue 1]. Honestly, I haven't noticed any serious bug difficulties. We can talk about the sports commentators; they are very, very good commentators. There is Thierry Henry as well. He is a great expert. He helps to understand better what the different formations proposed by a team or another were. To be honest, Amazon invested in this. In that way, I can't complain about this”. (Damien)

“An Amazon Prime account is used for other things than the Ligue 1. For the Ligue 1, there's a need to add extra money, but it is possible to share it. When you make the calculation, we are way under the price proposed by Téléfoot or Canal+ back in the day. There's also all the content of Prime Video and all the advantages of Prime when you order something on Amazon. In addition, it seems to work, and it seems to be profitable. Honestly, I hope it keeps working that way. It's comfortable for the viewers. I don't know if there are disappointed people in the service or people complaining, but I haven't had this feeling, whether it's on social media or among my relatives. I used to see more complaints about Téléfoot.” (Corentin A.)

### 3.2. Amazon's strategy

This previous quote permits us to open on another point, which is the strategy adopted by Amazon to expand its influence on the French market. "Our focus is on bringing customers the best premium video programming, when and how they want to watch it" (Koutroumanides et al., 2019a p.47). These words from the Senior Vice President, Business Development & Entertainment at Amazon, epitomize the objective of the OTT streaming platform. It echoes the observations made by Deloux et al. (2019) about how live sports broadcasting can represent a significant asset for the GAFA. The primary objective for the GAFA and Amazon, in that case, is to diversify their investments in order to increase their influence in a specific market (Deloux et al., 2019). "Amazon offers consumers its services at a loss with the goal of not only establishing a significant market share but market dominance, and persuading consumers to buy into Amazon Prime is a crucial element of that strategy." (Lindholm, 2019, p. 101). Many interviewees underlined the need to subscribe to Amazon Prime before purchasing a subscription to the Pass Ligue 1. Benjamin said: "In fact, Amazon Prime, there is also the part of Amazon Prime Video that permits you to get films and series as well. It is very interesting, and it rivals Netflix in that sense."

Sports content does not represent an important value for the company but is a way to attract people and encourage them to purchase its range of services (Lindholm, 2019). Indeed, Amazon is looking to strengthen the competitive advantages of its Prime program, which indirectly contributes to attracting more and more visitors to its site (Deloux et al., 2019). It is possible to confirm the results of the study led by Deloux et al. (2019) because few of the interviewees explained the utility of a combined subscription proposed by Amazon.

"Right now, because you can watch everything on one unique channel, Prime Video, it sounds logical to me. It is less problematic. Well, on my side, I don't have any problem. Besides, the fact that football is available on Prime Video... before, I used to watch many series available on Prime. So, it's not a concern for me". (Damien)

The arrival of a GAFA as the leading distributor of licensed sports events changed the organization of the broadcasting distribution market it disturbed the equilibrium established between the TV channels and the cord-cutting streaming platforms. In effect, live sports before the 2010s have a crucial role in financing a channel and attracting a bigger audience (Deloux et al., 2019; Durand et al., 2010). In the case of the GAFA and Amazon with its service, Prime Video does not invest in live sports to attract directly the audience.

One of the interviewees insisted on the fact that the introduction of Amazon and its service Prime Video in the French market was linked directly with the arrival of famous players in the Ligue 1.

“Although we’re talking about the arrival of Amazon in the Ligue 1, it is an American giant. Everybody knows that it is for financial reasons, but if you closely pay attention, it coincides with the arrival of football stars at the PSG. Messi signed this year; Neymar signed four years ago. I think, four years ago, the broadcasting rights were still in the hands of Canal+. But it is not a coincidence if Amazon has invested this year at the same time as Messi’s arrival [in the French championship]. Well, he helps the country be under the spotlight. Therefore, more people are likely to watch [the competition]. It is logical. There are more financial interests than serious sports interests, even though Canal+ is the emblem of the Ligue 1.” (Théophile)

It echoes the theory developed by Scelles (2017) about the importance of stars evolving in the championship. Scelles (2017) applies this theory to football and explains that the star quality of a championship can have some influence over the fans and can encourage them to watch the championship in question. In the case of the arrival of Amazon, it is possible to apply this theory all the way around because the signature of important football players at the PSG was a driving factor. As it was perfectly explained by one of the interviewees, there is a correlation between the rise in the prices of the broadcasting rights of sporting competitions and the interest of a distributor. To demonstrate this point, consider the arrival of Brazilian footballer Neymar to the PSG team in 2017. As declared by the president of the LFP, Nathalie Boy de la Tour, "we couldn't have a better ambassador than Neymar today" (Ryo, 2017). Neymar's presence offered the opportunity for the LFP to raise the price of broadcasting rights by 60% (Pereira, 2018).

### *3.3. Rethink the distributors offer system*

Based on the words of the interviewees, they all noticed that the current distribution model for Ligue 1 is reaching the end of its useful life and needs to be revised to propose a service more in line with the viewers’ expectations. According to the interviewees, this service should be less expensive and involve fewer distributors. The high financial cost of guaranteeing full access to Ligue 1, the multiplicity of distributors, both remain the most important problems of the current system (Deloux et al., 2019). These issues encourage people to do piracy or favor the practice of sharing accounts (CSA, 2021; Jiang et al., 2018; Kariyawasam & Tsai, 2017). The advent of Prime Video was seen by eight out of thirteen interviewees as a new and more affordable option to watch the Ligue 1.

It was interesting to observe that the interviewees aware of the functioning of the current system evoked few ideas to transform it. Three interviewees made suggestions to solve these issues. For example, Benjamin suggested a co-distribution system between the current distributor to propose a pass including all the services available on the market. He declared:

“As long as I can save money, I’ll do it because the distributors think that we are nothing but cash cows by providing quite expensive subscription programs. Apart from unifying a bit,

regarding what they earn from the TV broadcasting rights, even though they paid a lot of money, I think they could try to standardize the offer. They should agree on the fact that Amazon gets all the rights for the Ligue 1, although Canal refuses to leave them. They should suggest a co-distribution or a subscription a bit more expensive [...], a pass Canal/Amazon similar to BeIn/RMC, although it's not worthwhile right now. That could be interesting to propose an offer with different prices [...] but that you can have a less expensive offer and I believe that football fans would pay anyway". (Benjamin)

This point is in line with the observations made by Deloux et al. (2019) about the fact that an offer proposed by a GAFSA could modify the current established system by reducing the number of subscriptions offered and provide a more personalized offer thanks to which the fan communities could communicate with each other (Kim & Mao, 2021; Deloux et al., 2019).

The pay-per-view was an alternative proposed by one of the interviewees, and this approach was interesting to mention because it would offer an eventual compromise for the viewers as opposed to paying a subscription for the Pass Ligue 1. The pay-per-view or a-la-cart system is a system enabling the viewer to pay just to have access to specific content in return for the viewer watching a few advertisements (Prasad et al., 2003; Keating, 2018). In that case, "by viewing from a large selection of ads, viewers can precisely determine their discount and, therefore, the price they pay" (Prasad et al., 2003 p.14). This system is not popular in live sports, but it is used in the case of UFC championships and boxing live events (Reams & Shapiro, 2017; Butler et al., 2020). As Robin L said: "For me, pay per view is the solution." It's easy. You surf on the website, you click, you pay three bucks, and the game starts. You don't have to hack or download anything."

In addition to that offer of pay-per-view, another interviewee suggested a more personal offer for the fans attending stadiums because they do not watch games on a device while they are at the stadium. This offer would propose content limited to away games, so at least viewers can organize their consumption of the Ligue 1.

"If they create a subscription system consisting of paying a game or an offer for away games, even if it represents half of their profits for Amazon, that could be interesting because in a stadium there are twenty to sixty thousand people, and those people don't watch home games." (Samuel)

Another interesting point that was addressed by the interviewees was the possibility that Amazon might purchase the broadcasting rights of other championships and sports to diversify its catalog. This option was proposed by the interviewees, who acknowledged that a subscription program costing €12.99 per month just for the Ligue 1 might be expensive. For instance, the growing expansion of e-sports could be an asset for the OTT streaming service and could represent a significant marketing

value since professional football clubs such as the PSG or the OM have invested in this domain (Lefebvre et al., 2018).

“I have to admit, as it happens, if Amazon manages to propose content about e-Sports, because I’m a football fan but also an e-sports fan because of the games I’m playing, it would influence my reflection about getting or not getting my proper subscription program.” (Damien)

To conclude this part, these interviews invite us to question the current football broadcasting market and system. The arrival of Prime Video in the Ligue 1 raises many questions and interrogations, but the opportunities for an OTT streaming platform remain numerous if it manages to take into account the expectations of the viewers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to address the following research question: how do French viewers aged between 20-29 years old perceive the arrival of Prime Video as the new leading distributor of the French Ligue 1 and how does this arrival affect their consumption practices? The data collected allowed us to highlight three core concepts: the audience sports consumption, the audience's viewing habits, and the "Netflix-ication" of sports broadcasting.

### 1. Main observations

As highlighted by several studies, live football events are programs that gather large audiences and generate important profits for the distributors (Baimbridge, 1996; Durand et al., 2010; Hutchins et al., 2019). The introduction of the GAFAs and their OTT streaming platforms into the football broadcasting system reshuffled the deck between the current distributors and introduced the audience to new viewing options. In France, this transformation started in 2020, with the advent of Amazon's video streaming service, Prime Video, as the leading distributor of the Ligue 1. In order to better understand the stakes related to this topic, this inquiry aims to understand the audience's motives for sports consumption. The data collected brought out several motives, such as socialization, the aesthetic of football, the game quality, and the accessibility of football. Because the Ligue 1 is the local championship and the fact that football is a "mass sport" (Durand et al., 2010), access to watch the competition is facilitated. It contributes to reiterating the socialization process behind football watching (Kim & Mao, 2021). Football creates a feeling of belonging that can be associated with patriotism (Nüesch & Franck, 2009). Previous research has shown that socialization and social connections are important in enjoying live sports (Kim & Mao, 2021; Nüesch & Franck, 2009). Despite the development of cord-cutting internet connected devices, which tend to individualize the viewing experience of the audience (Kim & Mao, 2021; Havard et al., 2021; Hutchins et al., 2019), watching football remains a collective activity for all the interviewees. They developed behaviors that encouraged interactions, such as teasing or collective watching (Adetunji, 2013).

The development of cord-cutting internet connected devices allows the audience to consume not only the championship but also derived content (recaps, video game related content, e-sports) on multiple screens. This process is coined as "mediated consumption," which is defined as an alternative consumption of live sports to physical attendance through electronic devices (Kim & Mao, 2021, Yim et al., 2020). This point is central in the analysis of this research because, in the case of the Ligue 1, the viewing experience of the interviewees was transformed. Previous studies have drawn a report on that

point (Ayten et al., 2019; Banerjee et al., 2013; Botterill et al., 2015; Hutchins et al., 2019; Keating, 2018). Due to the fact that the interviewees belong to the age group called "The Millennials", they are described as "digital natives" (Guerrero Pérez et al., 2018; Kwak et al., 2022; Lera-López et al., 2012; Podara et al., 2019). Therefore, their consumption of football is concentrated on portable devices (laptops, smartphones, and game consoles) because video streaming platforms are available on these devices (Boehmer, 2016; Sadana & Sharma, 2021; Sathya & Muruges, 2020).

This progressive shift in the viewing habits of the audience has made some room for new distributors in the French football broadcasting market. The data revealed that the current system favored by the LFP is no longer in ad equation with the needs of the audience. (Deloux et al., 2019; Koutroumanides et al., 2019b). In 2020, the failure of Mediapro and Téléfoot shows that the system currently in place no longer meets the needs of viewers, either in terms of the quality of services or the prices offered (Deloux et al., 2019; CSA, 2021). The multiplication of the number of distributors for the championship represents a significant expense for the interviewees and contributes to the development of piracy in different forms (account sharing, illegal streaming websites, or IPTVs). This climate of uncertainty and difficulty in live sports broadcasting represents a non-negotiable opportunity for GAFA and OTT streaming services like Amazon to expand their influence over local markets and get more clients (Hutchins et al., 2019; Campisi, 2021). This change in the organization of the broadcasting rights epitomizes the process of "Netflix-ication of broadcasting sports" described by Lindholm (2019) and encourages the millennials, who are the new media audience, to rethink the way they are consuming live football.

Despite the remaining concerns and questions about the Pass Ligue 1's price-quality ratio and Prime Video's new role in the French football broadcasting market, the interviewees who subscribed to the offer appear satisfied with the service's quality (Jiang et al., 2018). As mentioned by one of the interviewees, it is the beginning of Amazon's project; it needs to mature. Besides, the war against piracy led by the French government and the LFP makes it more and more difficult to access illegal streaming (Karayan, 2022; Gavard, 2022), which encourages viewers to turn themselves towards legal options. The interviewees are aware of the high cost of watching the Ligue 1, and although they favor legal options over illegal streaming, they still try to limit their expenses with account sharing, for instance, but they want to keep a certain ethic concerning piracy and illegal streaming.

## **2. Limitations**

The realization of this research paper faced several limitations that must be evoked. Among these limitations, the size of the sampling has to be addressed. The size of the target audience for this

inquiry is quite limited because in-depth interviews were conducted. The number of interviews was limited on purpose to reach the point of saturation in data collection (Guest et al., 2006).

On the occasion of this investigation, only thirteen people were interviewed. Consequently, the answers proposed by the interviewees rely on their personal experiences which are biased. Besides, this research focused on people located in a specific area, which reinforces the bias in the research and the interpretation of data. The interpretation of the data might influence the validity and credibility of the results of this research (Onwuegbuzie & Leetch, 2006).

The initial objective of this research paper was to combine qualitative and quantitative analysis with a survey and in-depth interviews. However, to keep this thesis doable and provide quality work in a limited period of time, the survey was not conducted. The use of a survey would strengthen the reliability of the data collected by combining qualitative and quantitative data (Zohrabi, 2013).

### **3. Discussion**

One of the main characteristics of this research paper is the newness of its topic. Due to the fact that the process of “Netflix-ication” of sports broadcasting in France started in 2020, the literature on this topic is relatively scarce. Consequently, this study used resources focusing on other countries and sports leagues (USA, UK, Spain, and Germany) that already experienced the arrival of GAFA and OTT streaming platforms in their local broadcasting rights markets (Hutchins et al., 2019; Koutroumanides et al., 2019a; Lera-López et al., 2018).

For further research, it could be interesting to conduct this inquiry to a larger scale which includes a wider audience. In the case of the French context, research about this topic is dealing with the football broadcasting rights market before the advent of Prime Video (Koutroumanides et al., 2019b, Deloux et al., 2019; CSA, 2021). There are few research focusing on this subject due to the lack of information available. It is for this reason that this research paper aims at contributing to gather more data for further research.

Furthermore, this research paper helps to pave the way to further research about the consequences of GAFA and OTT streaming platforms’ development in live sports on the viewers’ viewing habits. Football is one of the most popular sports, but the arrival of platforms like Amazon can contribute to putting under the spotlight other sports that are less watched and diversify the type of sports watched by the millennials (audience targeted for this research) (Deloux et al., 2019).



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## 7. APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: interview guide

As mentioned earlier in this paper, these interviews will address four core topics and concepts. Before discussing them, it is necessary to provide the interviewee with all the details related to confidentiality and permission to record and use the data provided during the interview (Adams & Cox, 2008). In addition to permission and confidentiality, I must set the conditions for anonymity if it is required by the interviewee. Then, a short and complete introduction of the topic of the interview will be presented to the interviewee, but this presentation should remain brief and not too detailed to retain information for the interview (Adams & Cox, 2008). Adams & Cox (2008) propose a comprehensive guideline to organize the interviews and separate this process into four steps.

First, the interviewer should present his/her background and invite the interviewee to do the same. This step permits us to provide more details about each other's "equipment and experience in general" (Adams & Cox, 2008 p.22). The goal here is not to ask for personal details but to establish a trusting relationship. To do so, ice-breaking questions will be asked to make the interviewees comfortable. Indeed, the interviewees should have the impression of "talking with an ultra-interested and attentive conversational partner" (Guest et al., 2013 p.114).

#### Questions

##### *Background/ice-breaking questions*

1. Thank the interviewee for his/her availability and the time he/she takes to answer the questions.

##### Presentation of the interviewee (background according to Adams & Cox, 2008)

- How are you?
- Can you introduce yourself in a few sentences?
- How old are you?
- What is your occupation?

Voluntary omission: Depending on the answer, ask about the type of job or studies and whether the interviewee enjoys his or her career or studies.

2. Present the topic of the research and its goals.
3. Describe the procedure and how the interview will be organized.

##### Anonymity and consent from the interviewee

- As you know, this interview is for academic purposes only. Do you consent to being recorded?
- Also, would you prefer to be anonymized or do you accept that your name will be mentioned?
- Do you consent to having this data used for secondary analysis?

*General questions about the interviewee's sports consumption and viewing habits ("Letting off steam" step according to Adams & Cox, 2008)*

#### Consumption and general viewing habits

- Do you consume sports content?
- If so, which ones?
- What is your favorite sport to watch?

Voluntary omission: If the interviewee has a preference for another sport than football, ask the reasons why and if he/she watches football.

- What is your favorite sportsman, sportswoman or team?

#### *Key concept n°1: football and the interviewee's relationship with the sport*

The objective of these questions is to understand the relationship between the interviewee and football and the reasons why he/she consumes football content. To reinforce the pertinence of these following questions, the article "Spectators' Identification with French Sports Teams: A French Adaptation of the Sport Spectator Identification Scale" written by Bernache-Assollant, Bouchet, and Lacassagne and published in 2007 was selected. This article highlights the notion of "sports identification" as measured with the "Sports Spectator Identification Scale" (SSIS) (Bernache et al., 2007 p. 83). Before explaining more precisely what the SSIS is, it is important to define the concept of "sports identification." In the aforementioned article, the authors defined it as "the extent to which an individual feels a psychological connection to a team or an athlete" (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001), as mentioned by Bernache-Assollant et al., 2007, p.83). Besides, the authors underline that this notion has been found to be a strong predictor of sports spectators' behaviors (Wann, Dunham, Byrd, & Keenan, 2004; mentioned by Bernache-Assollant, 2007).

By asking questions around this concept, it offers the possibility to focus on the fan theory to determine the reasons why an interviewee is likely to watch football and, in that case, French football. Before developing further on this point, it is essential to understand what identifies a fan. "A game is not just a game in the case of sports in general; it implies a psychological process on the individual

(Kahle & Riley, 2004; mentioned by de Groot & Robinson, 2008)". First, "sport cannot just be substituted by other activities" (de Groot & Robinson, 2008, p.118). Second, fans strongly identify with their team and consider themselves members of the team in question (Kahle & Riley, 2004; mentioned by de Groot & Robinson, 2008). This point refers to the sense of belonging that can influence a consumer to watch sports or attend sports events (Kim & Mao, 2021). For these reasons, it enables the measurement of the frequency of viewing football content and opens the door to another key concept of research viewing habits.

#### Reasons why the interviewee consumes football content

- Why do you watch football?
- Do you have any preferences when it comes to which championship you watch?
- Do you see yourself as a fan?

Voluntary omission: Depending on the answer of the interviewee, it will be possible to make a link with stadium attendance.

Voluntary omission (2): About fandom

#### *Key concept n°2: the interviewee's viewing habits*

Underlying the interviewee's relationship to football enables them to make a transition to the second core concept of this research, which is viewing habits. To provide a theoretical framework that could be associated with the questions, the article "Sport consumers' motivation for live attendance and mediated sports consumption: a qualitative analysis" written by Kim and Mao (2021) will be used. It presents the concept of "mediated sports consumption" (Kim & Mao, 2021), which permits making a link between consuming football and the use of media. In effect, the authors have defined the term as "consumption of sports through substitute outlets, including home television, online streaming, social networking, sports bars, and movie cinema, is an alternative to physical attendance (Raney 2006; Weed 2007; Fairley and Tyler 2012 mentioned by Kim & Mao, 2021 pp.515–516)".

#### Motivations of mediated consumption

- How do you watch football?
- How often do you watch it?
- Do you watch the Ligue 1?

Voluntary omission: In case of positive answer, possibility to ask on which television channel and if

there is a use of Amazon Prime Video?

- If you watch the Ligue 1 on TV, which TV channel would you favor?

*Key topic n°3: the streaming use to consume sports and Prime Video*

To propose questions about this third key concept in the interview, the questions will try to underline the process of "Netflix-ication" of the football industry, mentioned by Lindholm in his article "The Netflix-ication of sports broadcasting" published in 2019. The "Netflix-ication" of sports in general can be explained by the development of the internet (Lera-López et al., 2012). In effect, the internet has had a significant impact on the modification of consumer behavior in terms of sports consumption and attendance. It changed the relationship between leisure options and the consumer's time (Lera-López et al., 2012). "Consequently, daily Internet use seems to be a substitute" for sports attendance (Lera-López et al., 2012, p.282). This point developed by Lera-López et al. (2012) echoes the fact that streaming services and websites have become "vital to consumers" (Bailey, G. 2019 p.324) and, for that reason, sports leagues are investing more money in live streaming services. The three previously mentioned articles allow for the establishment of a framework for the digitization and "streaming-ization" of the sports industry in general. The following question will help to understand how the interviewee perceives these changes in the industry and whether they positively or negatively impact their viewing habits. Furthermore, another article published in 2019 titled "The Evolution of the Pay TV Market and the Subscriber Profile" by Medina, Herrero, and Portilla provides us with our first glimpse into the type of consumers in Spain. The following question will try to observe whether it is applicable in the French context.

- As you know, since fall 2021, Prime Video has become the leading distributor of the Ligue 1. Have you experienced difficulties in watching Ligue 1 football games on TV?
- How did the arrival of Prime Video impact your watching habits?
- Do you consider, or maybe have you bought, a subscription to Prime Video?

Voluntary omission: depending on the interviewee's answer, it offers the possibility to ask about the quality of the service, the price, and if it is, according to them, worth it or not. Moreover, it is possible to ask whether the interviewees could favor streaming over traditional TV for their daily consumption of football

*Key concept n°4: illegal streaming practices and alternative offers*

The development of pay-streaming services in the sports industry has changed the development of the consumer's viewing habits. With the development of the internet, in parallel, other habits and

services have appeared, and among them are illegal streaming or e-gaming. The development of the streaming industry and the literature associated with it have contributed to the emergence of new issues. For instance, streaming industries are now facing the question of illegal consumption and the need for new regulation around this problem. The article "Copyright and live streaming of sports broadcasting" by Kariyawasam & Tsai, published in 2017, permits one to get an insight on regulations and how viewers alternatives to bypass these regulations. Besides, with the emergence of gaming streaming platforms such as Twitch or also social media, it would be pertinent to ask the interviewees about their potential use of media and how they influence their viewing habits. The recent article "Predicting viewer gifting behavior in sports live streaming platforms: The impact of viewer perception and satisfaction" written by Liu, Tan, and Pawar and published in 2022 permits us to propose a first insight into this topic.

#### Use of illegal streaming services

- Do you use illegal streaming?
- If so, can you explain the reasons?
- Do you watch sports on other devices, such as IPTV?
- Would you consider subscribing to a legal streaming service if this one was affordable?

Voluntary omission: depending on the interviewee's answer, there is the possibility to ask about the use of other devices such as IPTV.

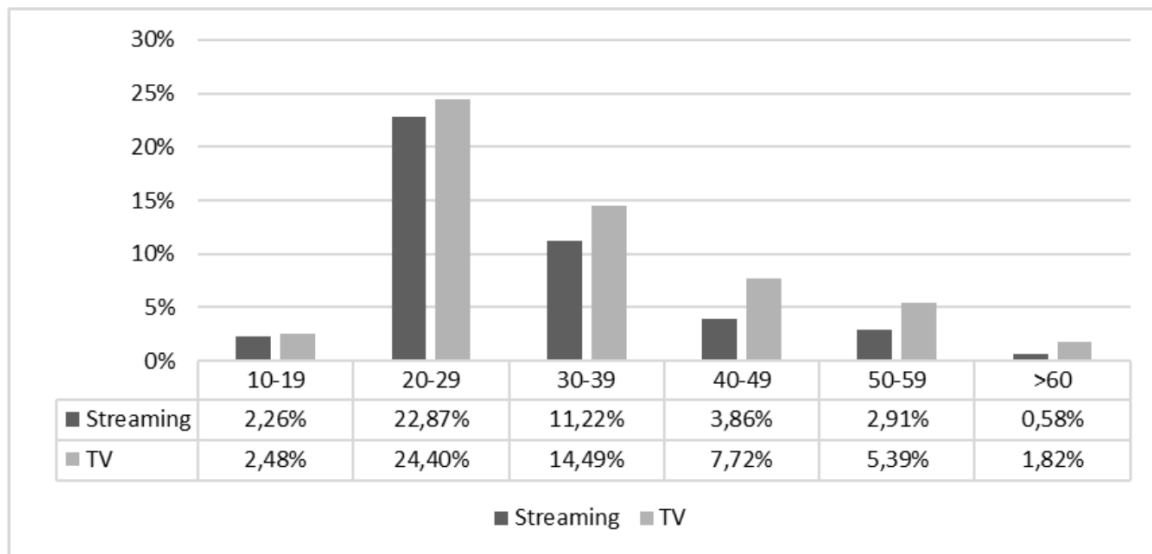
#### Use of live streaming platforms

- Do you use live streaming platforms such as Twitch or YouTube in general? If so, in which case?
- What are the motives for using these types of platforms?
- Do you play football simulation video games (e.g., FIFA or PES) in addition to watching football?
- Do you consume videos or live streams related to football video games?
- If so, does it influence your viewing habits concerning the Ligue 1?

### **Appendix 2: Chart n°1**



**Figure 1 Sports Consumption – Streaming vs. TV [percent]**



Source: Budzinski, Lindstädt-Dreusicke, & Gaenssle (2019)<sup>7</sup>

Source: Budzinski, O., Gaenssle, S., & Kunz-Kaltenhäuser, P. (2019). How Does Online Streaming Affect Antitrust Remedies to Centralized Marketing? The Case of European Football Broadcasting Rights. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3417423>

**Appendix 3: Call for witnesses posted on social media**

## **Hello à tous les amateurs de foot !**

Dans le cadre de mon mémoire de fin d'année, je recherche des personnes à interviewer

- Hommes et femmes
- 20-29 ans
- vivant en France
- Suivant la Ligue 1
- Ayant (ou pas) un abonnement Amazon Pass Ligue 1

Si vous correspondez aux critères ou connaissez quelqu'un y correspondant, n'hésitez pas à m'envoyer un mail à l'adresse suivante :

[613944yd@student.eur.nl](mailto:613944yd@student.eur.nl)

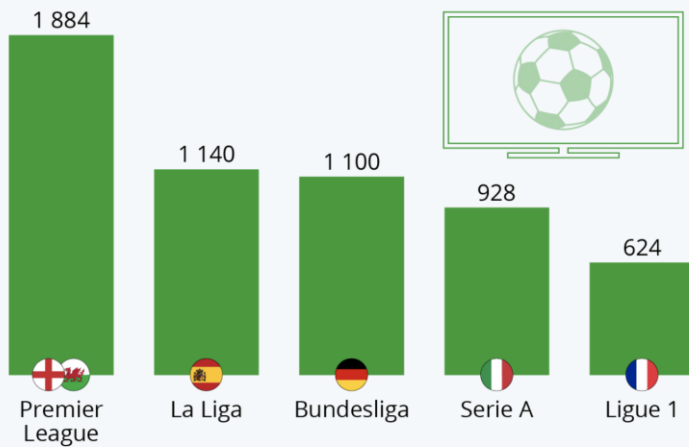
Merci beaucoup ! Cela m'aiderait énormément ♥



### **Appendix 4: Chart n°2**

## Les droits TV du Big Five

Revenus des droits TV domestiques des championnats de football pour la saison 2021-2022, en millions d'euros



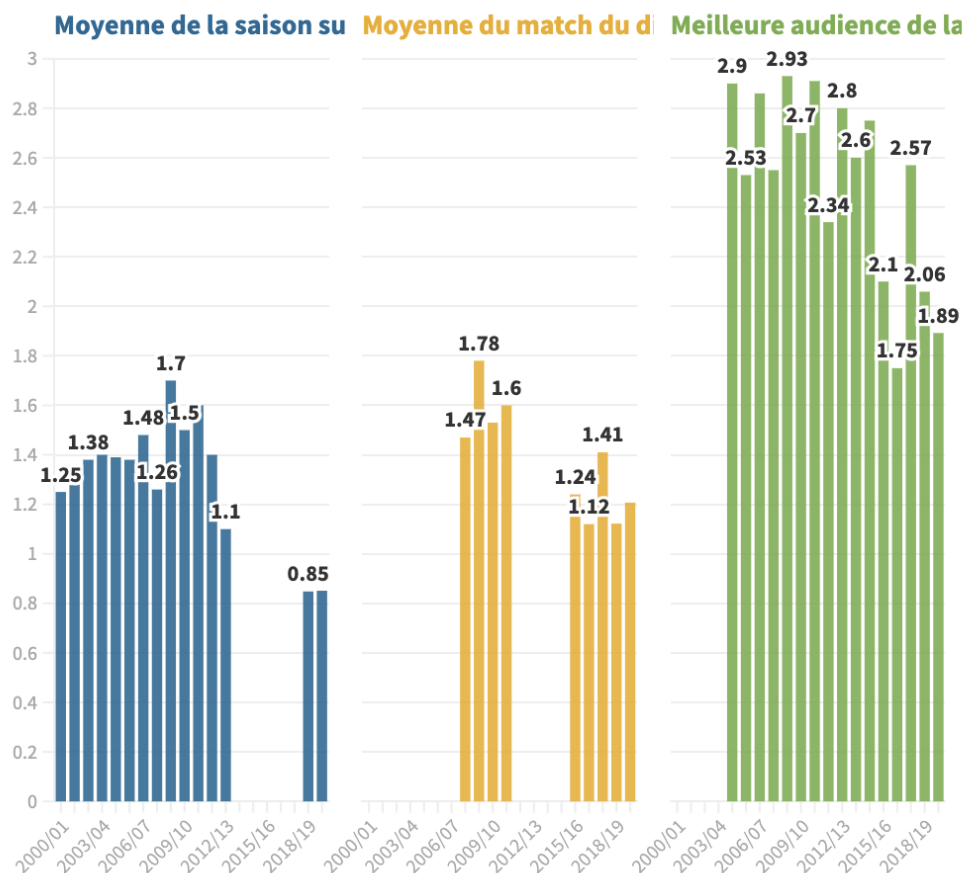
En date du 4 août 2021.

Sources : KPMG Football Benchmark, rapports média

Source: Gaudiaut, T. (août 5, 2021). Les droits TV du Big Five [Image digitale]. Retrieved juin 22, 2022, from <https://fr-statista-com.accesdistant.bu.univ-paris8.fr/infographie/24103/montant-des-droits-tv-domestiques-ligue-1-et-grands-championnats-europeens/>

### Appendix 5: Chart n°3

## L'audience de la Ligue 1 (en millions de téléspectateurs)



**Sources:** Capital pour les saisons 2018/19 et 2019/20 ; rapports annuels de la LFP pour les saisons 2000/01 à 2010/11 ; étude de Canal Plus citée par la décision de l'Autorité de la concurrence du 30 juillet 2014 pour l'audience moyenne des saisons 2008/09 à 2012/13; conférence de presse de la LFP d'avril 2018 pour le match du dimanche soir des saisons 2015/16, 2016/17 et 2017/18 ; presse pour la meilleure audience des saisons 2011/12 à 2017/18.

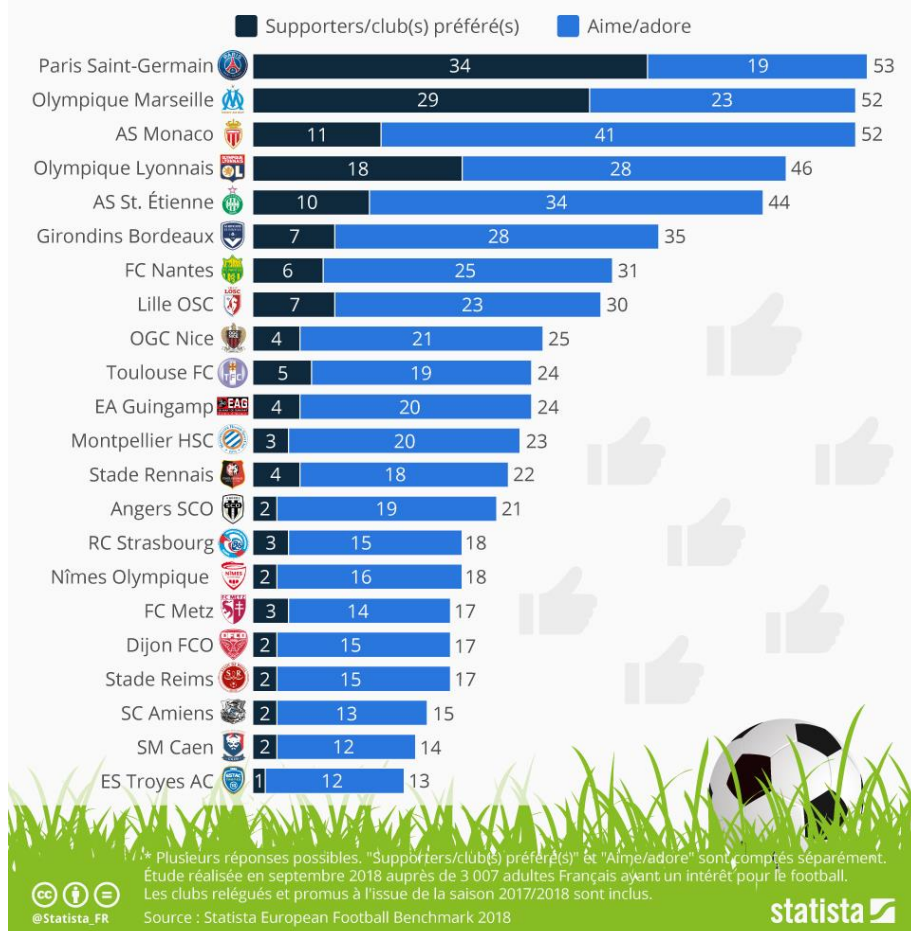
Source: Henni, J. (2021, December 6). *Comment la Ligue 1 a perdu la moitié de ses téléspectateurs.*

Capital.fr. <https://www.capital.fr/entreprises-marches/comment-la-ligue-1-a-perdu-la-moitie-de-ses-telespectateurs-1391469>

### Appendix 6: Chart n°4

## Les clubs les plus populaires de Ligue 1

Part des répondants qui sont fans/aiment les clubs suivants, en % \*



Source : Gaudiaut, T. (novembre 28, 2018). Les clubs les plus populaires de Ligue 1 [Image digitale].

Retrieved juin 22, 2022, from <https://fr-statista-com.accesdistant.bu.univ-paris8.fr/infographie/16238/les-clubs-les-plus-populaires-de-ligue-1/>