

Bouncing between screens: social TV and Brazilian NBA audience

Bouncing
between screens:
a Social
TV study

André Luiz Maranhão de Souza-Leão

*Administration Graduate Program, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco,
Recife, Brazil*

Bruno Melo Moura

*Administration Graduate Program, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco,
Recife, Brazil and*

Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil, and

Fernando Sacic Carneiro-Leão

Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil

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Abstract

Purpose – Sports leagues have stood out in the entertainment industry due to their great economic value and cultural impact. This is the case of the American sports leagues, with emphasis on the National Basketball Association (NBA), whose largest Latin American market lies on Brazil. The aforementioned league's audience is constantly growing, a fact that can be partially explained by the encouragement provided for its viewers to interact through social media, in a phenomenon called social TV. Accordingly, the aim of the present study is to investigate how social TV works as a means for Brazilian fans to coproduce their NBA broadcasting enjoyment through social media interactions.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors conducted a netnography on the community of fans engaged in Twitter hashtag #NBAnaESPN, which was released by ESPN to promote audience integration during NBA games' broadcasting.

Findings – A theorization about the role played by social TV in the way fan culture articulates through social media to enjoy broadcasting media products was herein presented. The findings of this study have evidenced three categories concerning the role played by television broadcasting, social media and the fandom in NBA consumption by Brazilian fans. Based on these findings, the authors got to the conclusion that social TV establishes a mediatised environment where fan culture can be articulated through social media to enable interactions about television broadcasting.

Research limitations/implications – The study was limited to members of the Brazilian NBA audience who engage in the official social media of the league's broadcasting.

Originality/value – The study heads toward a theoretical generalization based on the research results.

Keywords Social TV, Fans, NBA, Netnography, Trasmédiation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

American sports leagues are successful examples of cultural products capable of continuously growing in global markets (Lee & Cottingham, 2020; Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019). The National Basketball Association (NBA) stands out as global brand among American sports leagues (Liu, Baker, & Leopkey, 2021; Salaga, Tainsky, & Mondello, 2020).

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Brazil has the highest-rated NBA audience in Latin America (Falchetti, 2019), a fact that can be, at least partially, explained by the way the Brazilian broadcasting of American sports leagues encourages viewers to interact through social media (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019). The way television broadcasting and social media run into each other is known as social TV, which is a communication strategy focused on encouraging television viewers' interaction in social media platforms in order to engage in productive consumption practices (Proulx & Shepatin, 2012; van Es, 2016).

Investigations on social TV belong to the communication research field and aim at analyzing how television audience enjoyment takes place through discussions held at public Websites (Proulx & Shepatin, 2012). This process is in line with the media convergence phenomenon (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019), according to which, consumers move among different media platforms to engage in practices associated with the different cultural contexts they are part of (Fuschillo, 2020; Kozinets & Jenkins, 2021).

The concept of convergence was introduced by Jenkins (2008) as effect of participatory culture, according to which, media users share and co-create practices capable of combining production and consumption processes. This concept emerged from the analysis of fan practices, such as the productive way they act toward media products and intensify their relationship with them.

Fans were first addressed in consumer research conducted by Kozinets (2001), since then, they have been a recurrent topic in recent studies focused on investigating consumer interactions as cultural and productive practice (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Fuschillo, 2020). Fans' productivity lies on the way they receive and spread media contents (Chen, 2021). In order to do so, they often use available technologies and take on roles that are typically associated with producers (Fuschillo, 2020; Jenkins, 2008). More specifically, it can be seen in the way fans promote sports leagues through social media and help broadening the reach of television broadcasting (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019).

Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to investigate how social TV works as a means for Brazilian fans to coproduce their NBA broadcasting enjoyment through social media interactions. The study is justified for highlighting how viewers' interactions about television broadcasting reflect a communication and media management innovation process (Meese & Podkalicka, 2015), as well as how consumer interactions through social media are appropriated by marketing communication strategies (Muninger, Hammedi, & Mahr, 2019).

More specifically, the current research contributes to the literature in the field by addressing social TV as consumer research phenomenon, since it works as transmedia marketing strategy. Thus, we advocate that social TV can ground investigations focused on exploring big data about consumer behavior (Liu, Singh, & Srinivasan, 2016) or online consumer *ethos* (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019). Besides, social TV is closely associated with both media convergence and the appropriation of technologies, which are emerging topics in consumer research and whose combination still lacks investigation (Fuschillo, 2020).

Moreover, the current study has explored the understanding of how consumers' online interactions through media convergence can boost fans' relationship with sports brands (Ha, Kang, & Kim, 2017; Kim and Ko, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2022). Therefore, the present research has emphasized the role played by social TV as innovative marketing communication strategy.

Literature background

Although the Web was initially considered a threat to television content, it ended up becoming one of the main tools used to help expanding the audience consuming TV contents and media products (McPhillips & Merlo, 2008; van Dijck & Poell, 2015). Such a strategy reflects the growth of transmediation, based on which, multiple media encourage new and simultaneous ways to consume massively mediated products (Feiereisen, Rasolofoarison,

Russell, & Schau, 2021). Social TV is a transmedia strategy used as management tool to observe and map audience's interest in engaging on the Web about TV contents (Bellman, Robinson, Wooley, & Varan, 2017; Meese & Podkalicka, 2015).

Previous studies focused on investigating audience engagement have provided interesting explanations for fans' practices that help producers and consumers to set relationships with media products (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019). Thus, these studies often highlight fans as prosumers (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Chen, 2021), since their practices have exponential reach, either through cultural convergence, when they establish boundaries with peers, or through technological appropriation, in order to promote their opinions and experiences as content in multiple media and environments (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2021). Both convergence and technological appropriation depict fans as emblematic members of participatory culture (Fuschillo, 2020).

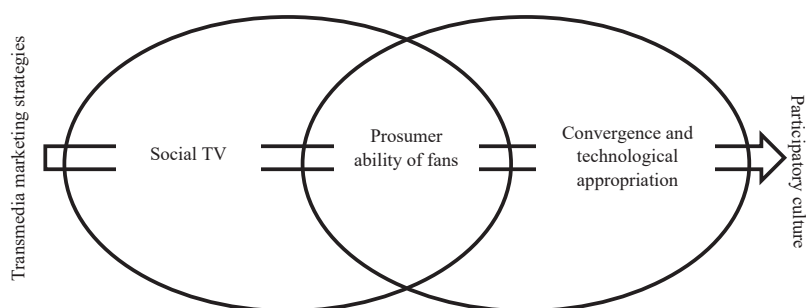
Although these studies were quite enlightening, they focused on two separate streams, namely: social TV as specific transmedia marketing strategy or convergence and technological appropriation as participatory culture practice. Accordingly, our study understands both streams as part of a process capable of revealing the prosumer ability of fans. Thus, a background literature framework (see Figure 1) is herein proposed. According to it, transmedia marketing strategies can embody fans' productivity in a process that spreads its content among participatory culture members. Based on this process, we suggest that social TV enables and encourages fans' prosumption through convergence and technological appropriation.

We herein present two literature sections to substantiate the advocated arguments. The proximity between theoretical concepts is firstly addressed based on social TV, which works as marketing strategy to encourage audience's engagement to act as fans. Subsequently, fan culture is presented as environment featured by prosumption practices, since convergence and technological appropriation are encouraged among participatory culture members.

Social TV: a transmedia marketing strategy capable of encouraging fans' productivity

Traditional mass media organizations try to re-invent themselves by encouraging their audience to participate in broadcastings through social media (McPhillips & Merlo, 2008; van Dijck & Poell, 2015). In the case of television, this process takes place as transmediation between screens, since consumers interact on social media about the content watched by them on TV (Feiereisen *et al.*, 2021).

This phenomenon is called social TV and it regards the intent of television producers to expand this content to the Internet (Proulx & Shepatin, 2012). Initially, TV corporations considered Internet technologies and social media likely as threats. Nonetheless, the



Source(s): Prepared by the authors

Figure 1.
Literature background
framework

increasing media convergence has changed this perspective (van Dijk & Poell, 2015), since TV corporations realized that social TV was an innovative opportunity for both expanding their audience (Meese & Podkalicka, 2015) and advertisement formats (Bellman *et al.*, 2017).

Social TV enables a virtual space where different marketing agents (e.g. producers, consumers) converge through different media (van Es, 2016). Thus, social TV enables consumers to appropriate a second screen (e.g. smartphone, tablet and computer) to interact about the content consumed by them on television, a fact that sets contiguity between these media (Proulx & Shepatin, 2012).

By changing the role of consumers toward taking active position on broadcasting (Proulx & Shepatin, 2012), social TV can be featured as innovative marketing movement, according to which, viewers use Web technologies to connect to each other (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019; van Dijk & Poell, 2015). In a way, it works as an online word-of-mouth (WOM) through which consumers take on the role of spreading television contents to one another (Bellman *et al.*, 2017). Since TV content holds a variety of emblematic pop culture productions, its audience can often be assumed as fans (van Es, 2016). When they collectively converge between media, they engage in a technological appropriation process to establish participatory consumption practices that help maintaining the fan culture they belong to (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019).

Fan prosumption: convergence and technological appropriation in participatory culture contexts

Fans were introduced in consumer research by Kozinets (2001) as part of a specialized consumer subculture and they mainly gained notoriety for their production skills (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Fuschillo, 2020), as well as for their collective and proactive behavior (Scaraboto, 2015). Fan culture has become even more emblematic due to the popularization of electronic devices and social media, which enabled them to extend their interactions at large scale (Kozinets & Jenkins, 2021). These new technologies enabled active users (i.e. fans) to share contents that often complete their consumption experiences (Chen, 2021). Therefore, fans are members of consumer communities that oftentimes act as productive consumers who alternate between production and consumption functions (Cova & Cova, 2012).

Prosumerization is mainly highlighted in the context of new information and communication technologies (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019). Fans' active participation in these processes is mainly motivated by their pursuit of spaces for social interactions (i.e. fandoms) where they can feel comfortable enough to express themselves without inhibitions. Fandoms are featured by high member involvement levels, both with each other and with the media product binding them together. Therefore, investigating consumer communities like fandoms requires taking into consideration underlying symbolic values, such as exchanging experiences and information, sharing ideas and worldviews and forging moral relationships (Fuschillo, 2020; Scaraboto, 2015).

Therefore, fans' prosumerist ability attests to how market dynamics assimilate consumers' growing interest in acting in a proactive and creative manner. Thus, marketing works toward encouraging consumers to behave in compliance with their strategies (Ritzer & Miles, 2019). If one takes into consideration that fans are prone to maintain closer relationships with media products consumed by them, they are expected to spontaneously comply with the aforementioned strategies (Chen, 2021; Fuschillo, 2020), with emphasis on the way they take on the task to popularize content transmediation from television to the Web (Feiereisen *et al.*, 2021).

Nonetheless, there is no guarantee that fans will act in compliance with companies' interests (Eden, 2017). What happens can be understood as trade-off. On the one hand, prosumption enables managers to insert consumers in marketing strategies and even in the

production chain (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019). On the other hand, presumption enables consumers to change the value of the products consumed by them and increases the role played by them in different market structures (Roberts & Cremin, 2019).

Methodological procedures

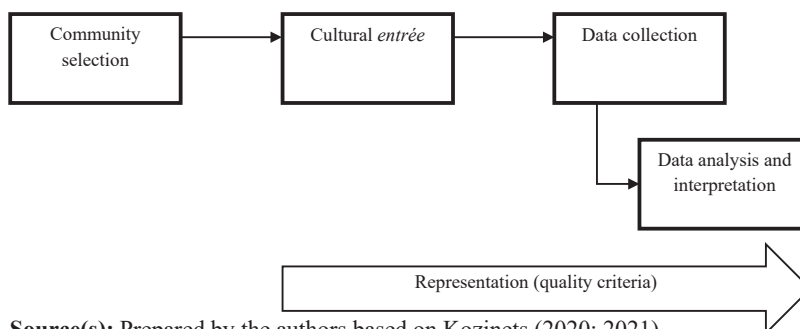
Netnography was herein adopted as methodology; it was adapted from ethnographic studies applied to consumer research focused on investigating consumer interactions in virtual environments (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016; Kozinets, 2020). Kozinets, Scaraboto, and Parmentier (2018) have indicated that netnography is a method used to elaborate an *ethos* chronicle. Thus, researchers' sensitivity is a historically situated consequence, since it depends on the local and temporal context of the analyzed interactions. Therefore, this method focuses on observing human experiences, by limiting its scope to the *ethos* investigated in sporadic or permanent moments, with regard to established cultural signs, rather than on conducting longitudinal comparisons.

Kozinets (2020) has suggested the netnographic research planning and implementation stages, which are depicted below to show this research conceptualization and the way it was carried out in the current study. It is worth pointing out that this process does not take place in a linear fashion; data analysis and interpretation start during fieldwork (i.e. data collection), whereas representation takes place from the cultural *entrée* stage, onward. Figure 2 illustrates this process.

Netnography starts with the *selection of the community* to be investigated. The social platform "Twitter" was herein selected because it is the official communication medium used by ESPN channels in Brazil – which account for broadcasting most NBA games in the country – and by its audience. The channel's team of narrators and commentators interacts with Brazilian fans of the league through the hashtag #NBAnaESPN and invites them to take part in discussions taking place during game broadcastings.

Cultural entrée, in its turn, refers to the time interval when researchers become familiar with the culture of the community to be investigated to better understand interactions and details that only members of that community would be able to decipher. It is worth pointing out that all researchers conducting the current investigation have been following NBA games since 2012; two of them are Twitter users who interact with other NBA fans about the league's broadcastings in Brazil.

Data collection refers to the process to archive the observed interactions, which comprise both the interactional texts and complementary elements to these interactions, such as photos and videos. The archiving procedure was herein performed on a monthly basis, based on using Buzzmonitor, which is a software specialized in monitoring social media. In total, more



Source(s): Prepared by the authors based on Kozinets (2020; 2021)

Figure 2.
Netnography stages

than 350 thousand messages posted from January 2018 to July 2021 were collected – this period comprised four league seasons. This process enabled focusing on monitoring fan interactions on a public social network; it was done based on [Arvidsson and Caliandro \(2015\)](#) proposition to investigate fans who publicly turn to social networks to express their involvement with media products.

Analysis and interpretation – which are planned to take place in parallel to data collection – refer to a process comprising different stages, namely, codification, reflection, abstraction, comparison, verification, refinement, theoretical generalization and (whenever possible) theorization. The analytical stage was carried out over a year based on a coding process, which was performed by one researcher, and revised and validated by the other two researchers participating in the research. Data were initially configured as codes to determine specific meanings observed in fans' texts. Based on this process, each code elicited by the first researcher was presented to, and discussed with, the second researcher and then, it was ultimately validated by the third one.

Despite the large amount of data – a factor featuring investigations focused on exploring Social TV and often associated with the treatment of Big Data – we decided to carry out a detailed analysis to help better understanding the conditions encouraging the interactions of the investigated *ethos*. This decision meets the proposal by [Kozinets et al. \(2018\)](#), according to whom, netnographic analysis is featured as consumption *ethos* chronicle. Thus, our option reflects the effort to apply netnography to a community of exponentially large consumption and that is familiar to researchers. Moreover, certain regularity was observed in the findings during the analysis and, in association with researcher's familiarity with the analyzed subjects, it made it possible dealing with the entire research corpus.

Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasize that the netnographic approach enables marketing research to perform theoretical generalizations based on the combination of deductive and inductive approaches ([Kowalczyk, 2018](#)). Thus, we initially adopted the deductive approach in order to contrast and compare our findings to the knowledge supporting the research problem based on the literature background; subsequently, at the second reflective stage, we adopted the inductive approach to reason about the marketing and social implications in an extrapolation process that reflected the study's contribution as theoretical generalization.

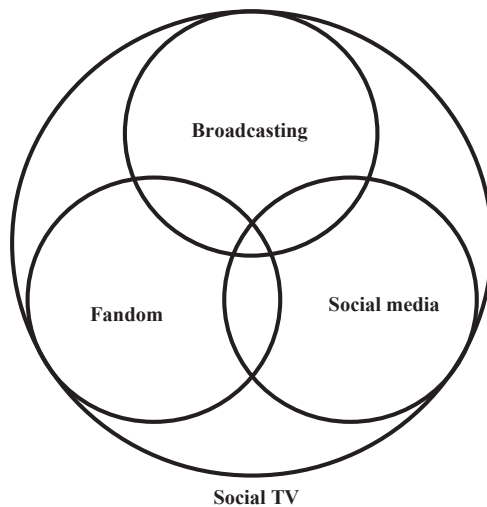
Toward a theoretical generalization based on the research results

Our research points toward three fundamental roles played by social TV in fans' cocreation to enjoy broadcasting media products. These roles are directly linked to producers (i.e. broadcasting), consumers (i.e. fandom) and consumption mediation (i.e. social media). Therefore, they complete each other within a community with members of the same consumption *ethos*. Thus, [Figure 3](#) was plotted by taking into consideration the interdependence of these instances when it comes to the observed phenomenon. It was done to suggest a tentative theorization about improvements enabled by social TV in the enjoyment of media products.

This conceptual framework addresses how the social TV phenomenon reflects the way fan culture articulates prosumer practices through social media to enjoy broadcasting media products. These categories comprise 18 codes.

Thus, these codes specifically revealed the empirical evidence, whereas the categories were designed to associate the results with concepts deriving from the literature background. [Table 1](#) presents these categories and codes to descriptively elucidate the aspects of results identified in our analysis.

Subsections below describe such categories and their codes. Categories are addressed through consumer research literature, whereas the performed analysis is contextualized by, and illustrated with, data excerpts taken from the research *corpus* for each code.



Source(s): Elaborated by the authors

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Figure 3.
Conceptual framework

Role played by broadcasting in transmedia consumption

Broadcasting and its overlap with social media indicate how social TV enables the expansion of both TV and social media platforms (Stollfuß, 2018; van Es, 2016). Accordingly, broadcasting points out the broader concept of transmediation, according to which, producers develop strategies to engage the audience through different contents and media, based on the growing integration of consumption practices through media convergence (Edmond, 2015; Feiereisen *et al.*, 2021).

Fans' highlight to NBA game broadcasts in Brazil (C01) is identified in messages associating the growth of both the league's audience and its fandom with the continuity of match broadcastings by ESPN since the 1990s. In order to illustrate this code, the following tweets (see Tweets #1 and #2 in Figure 4), about different broadcasts and moments, highlight fans' habit to continuously watch the NBA games on ESPN and their relationship with the Brazilian broadcasting team.

On the other hand, *comparisons between TV stations that broadcast the league games in Brazil* (C02) highlight fandom's acknowledgment of ESPN. The exclusivity in broadcasting key games of the season (ESPN channels have the exclusivity of broadcasting the NBA finals in Brazil), the possibility of binge-watching matches (two games broadcasted in a row) and the quality of the content about the game are the most valued aspects. They arise as arguments to evidence fans' preference for watching the NBA in Brazil through this TV network. Based on the comment posted in Tweet #3 (Figure 4), a fan compares ESPN broadcastings to those of Sports TV and he points out the superiority of ESPN.

The relevance of ESPN channels for Brazilian NBA fans can also be seen in the way they appropriate and promote contents originally produced by these channels. The way the *Brazilian NBA fandom engages in catchphrases of local broadcasts of the league* (C03) is represented by the large number of messages reproducing phrases that only make sense to fans who watch the league games narrated and commented by the ESPN team. An example of it can be seen in a message (see Tweet #4 in Figure 4) that appropriates a catchphrase created by narrator Rômulo Mendonça to praise moves performed on the basketball court.

Similarly, *fans echo athletes' nicknames created during broadcastings* (C04). Most ESPN narrators and commentators come up with creative ways to refer to the league players,

<i>Role played by broadcasting in transmedia consumption</i>	
Fans discuss about aspects they believe to be fundamental to media product's enjoyment through its broadcast. They see social media as the transmedia environment to speak with producers, as well as highlight the strong and weak points of broadcast, to guarantee their consumption enjoyment	
[C01] Fans highlight Brazilian NBA broadcasts	Brazilian NBA audience points out the importance of having local ESPN broadcasting league games for so many years
[C02] Fans compare the NBA broadcasting of Brazilian TV channels	Reports from the audience point out that ESPN NBA games' broadcasting is better than that of other channels
[C03] Fans identify themselves with striking catchphrases used during broadcastings	The audience gets excited with the humorous catchphrases used on Brazilian broadcasting, mainly during iconic matches
[C04] Fans reproduce Brazilian nicknames given to NBA athletes	Brazilian NBA fans embody nicknames given to league athletes in Brazilian broadcastings
[C05] Fans pick out the major Brazilian NBA narrator	The humorous and unique manner Rômulo Mendonça narrates the games is revered by most members of NBA audience in Brazil
[C06] Fans have difficulty in watching games that are broadcasted late at night	Part of the audience regrets the fact that they cannot watch all broadcasted games due to the Brazilian time zone
[C07] Fans complain about the number of broadcasted games	The number of NBA games broadcasted in Brazil is considered small by fans, who would like to watch more matches of their favorite teams
<i>Role played by social media in multiple-media consumption</i>	
Fans take ownership of social media to amplify TV consumption enjoyment through multiple-media interactions with their peers. They produce and promote contents that complete and qualify the media product resonance to encourage participatory attitudes by other fans, such as featuring in television broadcasts or engaging in discussions in social networks	
[C08] Fans turn to Twitter to access NBA content	The audience indicates how the hashtag released by ESPN enables them to follow the league when they cannot watch the games, as well as to find extra information
[C09] Fans represent the Brazilian audience in the NBA Twitter profile	Many Brazilian NBA fans interact in the Twitter official profile of the league in order to highlight the Brazilian audience and then, to demand greater attention to it
[C10] Fans promote league's trivia	Some Brazilian NBA fans engage in producing and sharing contents that promote league's trivia
[C11] Fans spread league's history	Some Brazilian NBA fans engage in producing and sharing contents that tell league's history
[C12] Fans produce league-related memes	Some Brazilian NBA fans engage in producing and sharing memes associated with the league, so their enjoyment of the games is funnier
<i>Role played by the fandom in convergence consumption</i>	
Fans converge to social space to encourage the establishment and maintenance of a lasting bond with the media product. They exchange information and personal experiences about enjoying the media product, as well as reinforce the importance of fans' relationships with peers	
[C13] Fans share how to watch all league games	Brazilian NBA audience exchanges information on how to watch every league game, including those that are not broadcasted in the country
[C14] Fans reverberate the leagues' major moments	Brazilian NBA fans engage in resonating major moments of the games and athletes' plays
[C15] Fans anticipate the leagues' next season	Brazilian NBA fans engage in discussing their expectations about the leagues' next season
[C16] Fans value the leagues' preseason games	Brazilian NBA fans debate about the importance, and echo the results, of leagues' preseason games
[C17] Fans share sources of information about the leagues	Brazilian NBA fans exchange information about content sources related to the league, athletes, franchises and moments
[C18] Fans declare abstinence during the league offseason	Brazilian NBA audience regrets the long league's offseason time and the 2020 pandemic hiatus, as well
Source(s): Elaborated by the authors	

Table 1.
List of codes and categories

whether they are based on their appearance, performances or on some circumstance prevailing within the Brazilian fandom. One of the most notorious cases lies on the way Rômulo Mendonça refers to the main NBA star in activity: he calls LeBron James as Daddy Lebron. This term is often reproduced in several messages, such as the one (see Tweet #5 in Figure 4) posted by a fan who highlighted his interest in watching the Los Angeles Lakers x Minnesota Timberwolves game.

It is not by chance that the two previous examples mentioned Rômulo Mendonça. More specifically, the last one regrets the fact that the game in question was not narrated by him because it was broadcast late at night. The unique way he narrates the games is widely highlighted by fans, who consider Rômulo Mendonça the best narrator in Brazil (C05). On the other hand, this last example also emphasizes the difficulty of watching some NBA matches due to the unsuitable time they are broadcast in Brazil (C06), mainly due to the time zone of the Western coast in the USA. Fans also complain about the small number of NBA matches broadcast in Brazil (C07). National broadcasters have a limited game schedule, which makes it hard for Brazilian fans to watch their team's games. A message (see Tweet #6 in Figure 4) posted by a Chicago Bulls' fan depicts this frustration.

Role played by social media in multiple-media consumption

Social media, along with fandom interactions, attests the likelihood of having social TV working as catalyst of participatory cultures (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019). The way fans simultaneously consume multiple media (i.e. TV, social media), to relate to media products and to one another, emphasizes their ability to take ownership of technology (Bury, 2017; Hackley & Hackley, 2015). Such aspects are essential to enable these consumers to be productive in the cultural context bringing them together (Chen, 2021; Fuschillo, 2020).

Fans emphasize their pursuit of interactions and information about the NBA on Twitter (C08) as a way to follow the league, based on news about what happens beyond the matches (e.g. player signings or injuries) and results of simultaneous matches that are not broadcast in Brazil, among others. This code can be seen in the first tweet (Tweet #7) in Figure 5.

Tweet #1: I've been following #NBAnaESPN for at least 10 years and every time @EduagraespnAgra says "matchup" I understand "mete chapa" (September 30, 2020)

Tweet #2: Oh my, people can not love these broadcasts with @romulomendonca, @eduardaespn and @Bulgarelli1971 ?????? There's NO Mom!!! I've been following it for years, and I don't get tired of #nbanaespn (May 5, 2018).

Tweet #3: "NBA on ESPN is a thousand times better than on SporTV, it doesn't even compare to #NBAnaESPN". (March 10, 2019)

Tweet #4: NOT HERE DARLIHIIIING #GOGSW #NBAnaESPN @warriors (February 2, 2019)

Tweet #5: Daddy Lebrão is playing very late today and without @romulomendonca it's no fun. #nbanaespn (November 8, 2018)

Tweet #6: They finally remembered the Jordan/Pippen generation of fans and broadcast a Bulls' game.

#NBNaESPN (November 17, 2018).



Figure 4.
Role played by
broadcasting in
transmedia
consumption examples

Source(s): Adapted and translated by the authors-available on Twitter

Tweet #7: The good thing about watching the game on TV + Twitter is the people who really have an eye for the game tactics pointing out things like Caruso preventing Giannis from rebounding. Unfortunately, it's only worth assists and FG to fans of certain players. Winning Plays >>> #NBAnaESPN (March 7, 2020).

Tweet #8: Af, annoying @NBA or @NBABrasil points a right time, but it never starts right on time, tense #NBA #NBATwitter #NBAAIStar #LakeShow #NBAnaESPN (February 28, 2021)

Tweet #9: On the same stage that Kawhi was injured in that Game 1 of the 2017 Western Finals, now he lifts up Larry O'Brien. And closes the stage. #NBNaESPN (June 14, 2019)



Figure 5.
Role played by social
media in multiple-
media consumption
examples

Source(s): Adapted and translated by the authors, available on Twitter

Similarly, *Brazilian fans interact with official NBA profiles* (C09) to express themselves about the game broadcastings. A fan complains in a post (see Tweet #8 in Figure 5) about the recurring delay at the start of games.

In a different context, Twitter is seen as a way to complete the relationship between the Brazilian audience and the NBA. Such an understanding is seen when *fans share curiosities about the NBA* (C10), such as information about people involved with the league, mainly about athletes and technical committees, as well as when *fans share information about the history of the NBA* (C11), with emphasis on outstanding facts, and on their opinion about the most emblematic franchises. Both codes can be seen in a message posted by ESPN commentator Antony Curti, which was retweeted by hundreds of fans (see Tweet #9 in Figure 5). This message highlights how Kawhi Leonard, who was a Toronto Raptors' player at that time, won the NBA title in the same arena where he had sustained a serious injury two years earlier; it also draws attention to the fact that the aforementioned game was the last one to be played in that arena, since the Canadian franchise would start playing its games in a new sports center from the following season, onwards.

Fans also use Twitter to share viral and humorous content (C12) in order to set a fun atmosphere within the fandom. An example of it can be seen in a post captioned "Stephen Curry scored 30 points in the games #NBAnaESPN", which was followed by an edited photo of the point guard and Golden State Warriors' (GSW) star smiling next to a fire scene. The aforementioned photo is an adaptation of another photo, which is one of the most notorious memes among social networks, known worldwide as "Disaster Girl". In the herein highlighted case, the fan used the edited photo to indicate that the GSW player has caused the "disaster" faced by the New Orleans Pelicans in the match held on May 3, 2021, since his team faced and easily won the aforementioned team.

Role played by the fandom in convergence consumption

Fandom interactions – strongly encouraged by the broadcasting – have consolidated social TV as a means for producers and consumers to converge and strengthen relationships (van Es, 2016). Such a phenomenon can be triggered by either party (i.e. fans, managers), but it must be embraced by all agents involved in the process in order to expand and intensify media product-consumption possibilities (Proulx & Shepatin, 2012).

Brazilian fans share ways to watch all NBA games (C13) to help minimizing the lack of matches broadcast in the country or accessible to fans who cannot afford pay TV. As the main solution, they talk about the existence of, and the validity in signing, the NBA League Pass, which is the league's official streaming service that gives subscribers access to all matches. Several interactions have indicated that viewers often shared the same account to watch the games, as well as the use of pirate platforms and services that illegally broadcast Brazilian or international telecasts of the league. Two examples (see Tweet #10 and #11 in Figure 6) can feature this code. In the first one, a fan indicates that he has a link – likely a pirate

- Tweet #10: I found a very good link for those who just want to ask #NBAnaESPN (July 23, 2020)

Tweet #11: A link to watch the NBA final please #finaisnba #NBAFinals #NBAnaESPN (June 10, 2019)

Tweet #12: You are a crazy boy. I came back, was watching the memorable, epic performance of TJ Warren. 53 points in the match, 9/12 in balls of 3. WHAT A MATCH @romulomendonca @Bulgarelli1971 #NBAnaESPN (August 1, 2020)

Tweet #13: Now it's gone... Let's wait for the next season that my Brooklyn will come too hot with Kevin Durant, Kyrie Irving and DeAndre Jordan, under the baton of NASH!! #NBANfals #NBAnaESPN #NBA (October 11, 2020).

Tweet #14: NBA judge helping the Lakers in preseason play, man. He's not even ashamed... #NBAnaESPN (December 19, 2020).


Tweet #15: The Last Dance is the opportunity for the younger generation to realize that there is no way to compare Michael Jordan with another mortal. @romulomendonca @everaldomarques @CurtiAntony #nbanaespn (April 25, 2020)
- 

Figure 6.
Role played by the
fandom in convergence
consumption examples

Source(s): Adapted and translated by the authors-available on Twitter

one – to watch the match to be broadcasted by ESPN on July 23, 2020. In the second one, another fan asks for help from his peers to watch the broadcast of the fifth game of the 2019 finals.

The collaboration among members of the audience who interacted on social media can also be seen in the way *fans notice relevant moments in the league* (C14). The fandom considers valid information to inform their members about the games to be broadcast in Brazil, whose performance they believe to be worthy of watching live. In order to exemplify this code, we herein present the message from a fan, who made a point of returning to Twitter to highlight TJ Warren's extraordinary performance in the first playoff game between Indiana Pacers and Philadelphia 76ers (see Tweet #12 in Figure 6).

In another front of collaboration, *fans engage in anticipating the league's next season* (C15), mainly in periods without games, such as the months between seasons. These interactions are the ones where fans mainly talk about athlete's signings and wages, the annual selection of new players (i.e. NBA draft), changes in franchises' coaching staff, new athletes' evolution and limitations arising from the age of veterans and league stars, among others (see Tweet #13 in Figure 6). In the aforementioned message, the fan expressed his expectations about the following season since his favorite franchise was hiring stars of the league, as well as former NBA star Steve Nash, who is considered one of the greatest point guards in the league's history and who would experience his first season as coach of an NBA franchise.

In addition, *Brazilian fans address the games played at the pre-season* (C16). They talk about how seriously they should take the results and performances in the preparatory games, since they are not taken into account in the league's annual competition (i.e. regular season) or title shot (i.e. post-season). This aspect can be seen in a message (see Tweet #14 in Figure 6) posted by a fan, who appears to take these games seriously and who is outraged at the result and performance of the refereeing team during a preparatory match between Phoenix Suns and Los Angeles Lakers, held on December 19, 2020.

From another perspective, *fans indicate alternative media related to the NBA* (C17) to help better understanding the details of the league. Among the available options, they suggest podcasts, video games and documentaries to their peers. The indication of these contents becomes even more intense during the league's nonmatch periods, when *fans experience abstinence from NBA consumption* (C18). Year-over-year, during the period between seasons (i.e. off-season), fans often talk about how to get through typical broadcasting days without watching games. Both codes can be seen in a message (see Tweet #15 in Figure 6) posted on April 25, 2020, along with a picture of Michael Jordan celebrating a title at the time he played for the Chicago Bulls. The message refers to The Last Dance, which is a Netflix documentary that tells the story of the season that yielded the sixth and final title of the iconic Chicago Bulls team that, at that time, had Phil Jackson as coach and Michael Jordan as player. The fan suggests that the younger fans should watch it to find out that there has never been another athlete like Jordan in the history of the NBA.

General discussion

Based on the herein presented results, it is possible following to the consumer research abstraction phase proposed by Spiggle (1994). Accordingly, we first contrasted and compared the current results to the literature background in order to subsequently perform the theoretical generalization of our study.

Contrasting and comparing the current results to the literature background

Brazilian NBA fans' coproduction of their league broadcasting enjoyment is featured by their league's broadcasting interplay, use of social media and practices within the fandom. Moreover, it is possible seeing that the use of multiple media and the interaction among fans establish a consumption *ethos* featured by the fluidity among multiple marketing agencies.

The analysis applied to the total overlap of these categories has shown how social TV enables engaged audiences to boost media products' fruition. It happens when fans expand the ways of receiving and discussing what they watch (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2019), as well as when they share the same broadcasting, even when they are geographically dispersed, but virtually connected to each other (Bellman *et al.*, 2017).

Beyond the herein identified categories (see Table 1), our results point toward a consumption *ethos*, according to which, audience fluidly takes on multiple marketing roles. Although all three analyzed roles are autonomous marketing agencies, they benefit from interacting with one another. Nevertheless, these roles elucidate prosumption practices performed by fans in the cultural grouping that narrows their relationship with the media product consumed by them.

However, this scenario depends on the adopted transmedia marketing strategy, since Social TV requires media product managers to disclose and monitor virtual interactions about their television content. Moreover, they encourage their audience to take ownership of other media in order to take part of, contribute to or suggest improvements to the broadcasts consumed by them.

Therefore, we herein understand that the social TV extrapolates its function as transmedia marketing strategy to become a tool to encourage and popularize television contents in other media types. Simultaneously, social TV collides (see Figure 1 above) with the participatory culture conditions (i.e. convergence, technological appropriation) that enable television content fans to act as prosumers in social networks.

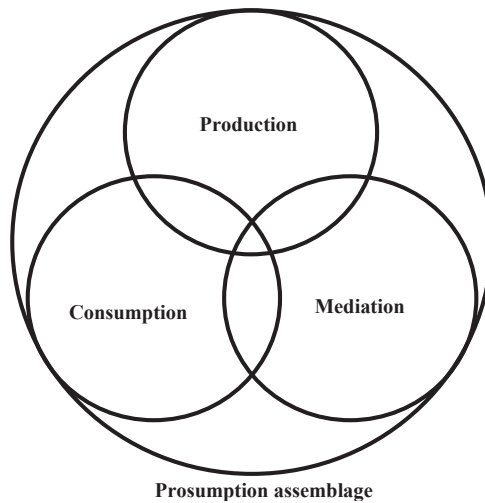
Theoretical generalization and research contribution

By enabling consumers to intensify their consumption relationships, the social TV forms socio-technical groups of networks and actors that were originally heterogeneous and/or dispersed. Thus, this process evidences that consumption can work as distributed network of cultural interactions (Arnould & Thompson, 2015), through collaborative practices that create the conditions to de-individualize consumers, based on the use of digital technologies (Thompson, 2019).

Such aspects have been understood as possibilities to interpret consumption as an agencement associating human and nonhuman elements (Hoffman & Novak, 2018; Thompson, 2019). This approach is based on a paradigm shift, which is mainly fore-fronted by assemblage and actor-network theories (Müller & Schurr, 2016). From this perspective, Latour (2007) has suggested that social actors prioritize their connections to objects, over their connections to each other. Since such objects are willed by other actors, networks are established by minimizing singularities and differences between heterogeneous agencies. This process features assemblages that, more broadly, reflect rhizomatic social structures that contingency individual wills in favor to the collective ones (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987).

The assemblage concept is fundamental to the process to abstract research findings and, consequently, to the theoretical generalization process. The three analyzed elements forming the social TV (i.e. broadcast, social media and fandom) reflect three market agencies consolidated in marketing research (i.e. producers, mediators and consumers). Consequently, our research points toward the possible combination of more than a single market agencement.

However, this combination is only possible because the social TV phenomenon is a prosumption assemblage capable of assimilating and contingencing the wills of each agency by prioritizing the expansion of television contents' reach by adding the interests of each of the identified categories. Based on our understanding, this assemblage is featured by multiple prosumption practices. Thus, Figure 5 was elaborated as extrapolation of the previous one (see Figure 7), where we performed the theoretical generalization of the current results.



Source(s): Elaborated by the authors

Figure 7.
Abstraction
framework

Based on our understanding, each marketing agencement plays fluid roles in prosumption *continuum* (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Ritzer & Miles, 2019). On the one hand, television product managers act as prosumers-as-producers (pap) by incorporating the continuous interest of fans in participating in the broadcasts consumed by them. Simultaneously, fans are prosumers-as-consumers (pac), since they incorporate the functions of bringing information to their peers about the media product consumed by them. As a middle ground, social networks work as the environment encouraging both pap and pac activities, since both television content managers and the audience produce their content to be promoted on digital platforms themselves.

Based on this scenario, all three agencements have rhizomatic relationships, as well as fluid and multiple boundaries, rather than vertical or horizontal ones. Although producers and consumers interact about topics that go beyond the television content, they continuously allude to it. It is a practice adopted by the market structure to expand cultural relationships based on the transmediation of contents enabled by the social TV phenomenon.

Based on our theoretical generalization, we herein suggest that social TV is a prosumption assemblage leading to a mediatization process capable of affecting individuals' social experience. Mediatization produces sociocultural spaces where the media is not only used as a means for social practices (e.g. consumption), but mainly as a force determining the way we socially relate to one another (Franco and Leão, 2016); moreover, it points out and establishes means for the agencement of contemporary social relationships (Christensen & Jansson, 2015).

Multiple networks simultaneously connect and reconnect such agencements, as well as exponentiate how human actors have their social practices increasingly influenced by nonhuman ones (Hoffman & Novak, 2018). These agencements are part of a broader effect, according to which, consumption arrangements are increasingly involved with individuals' connections to massively mediated cultural objects (Arnould & Thompson, 2015). It appears to be a process naturalized by the continuing role played by mediatization in individuals' social life (Christensen & Jansson, 2015; Franco & Leão, 2016).

Thus, the contribution of the current study lied on transmedia marketing strategies' ability to establish rhizomatic social structures capable of arranging and making the wills of the multiple marketing agents ubiquitous that are involved in this process. Moreover, it

depicted the growing intensification of the role played by mediation in consumer relationships that are significantly encouraged and intensified by people's interest in becoming participatory members of the consumption *ethos* they are part of.

Final considerations

Based on the research results and on our theoretical reflections, we got to the conclusion that social TV works as a virtual sociocultural space capable of mediatizing consumption through agencements of different human and nonhuman actors. Social TV goes beyond a strategic marketing tool used for content transmediation purposes by encouraging television product managers to incorporate the latent wills of their audience, which is an emblematic part (i.e. fans) of participatory culture. It combines the possibility of having multiple typical marketing agencies fluidly exercised and multiplied by a common interest and practice, namely: fans' prosumer ability.

Therefore, our study suggests that social TV is an innovative communication marketing strategy, since it works as mediatization process to potentiate the agencement of different market agents. More specifically, mediatization can be taken into consideration in the sports leagues' context because this segment has changed its focus toward globally and virtually expanding its consumer audience, as seen in the case of NBA (Salaga *et al.*, 2020). Thus, our research contributes to the adoption of social TV as communication marketing strategy to engage consumers to brands in the participatory culture context.

For extrapolation purposes, we emphasize that the theoretical generalization proposed in the current study is in line with a broader philosophical and social theory. Thus, the present study reinforces the understanding that the expansion of consumer research resonance requires conducting investigations capable of broadening socio-cultural reflections based on high social theories (see Arnould & Thompson, 2015; Thompson, 2019).

The current study has only investigated the interactions of part of the Brazilian NBA audience, mainly of individuals who engage in the official social media of the NBA league's broadcasting and it featured a limitation to the research. However, it is worth emphasizing that this choice was incidental, since the social TV phenomenon is determined by interactions in social media about the television content consumed by viewers.

Thus, we believe that this limitation opens room for future research focused on investigating how the consumption of synchronous television contents can gain greater relevance to its audience through social TV. Besides, our study opens room for discussions about how globally diffused sports leagues or sporting events with global resonance establish cultural consumption practices, a factor that can also be a topic of investigation in future research. Finally, future studies should explore how other sports leagues (e.g. UEFA Champions League, La Liga, Premier Leagues and Major League Baseball) are consumed in multiple media in countries that do not host their games, in order to provide information for the elaboration of strategies focused on new consumer markets.

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Corresponding author

André Luiz Maranhão de Souza-Leão can be contacted at: andre.sleao@ufpe.br

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