“The Second Social Screen”

Use of WhatsApp social groups while watching the World Cup in soccer

and its impact on enjoyment and engagement

**Introduction**

The World Cup soccer tournament, which takes place once every four years, is among the largest, most rousing and interest-generating sports events ever organized. The broadcast of the World Cup soccer matches attracts hundreds of millions of viewers around the world in a multifaceted experience. The live broadcasts of the final games of the World Cup are some of the most widely-viewed media events, and even attract viewers who do not usually watch soccer matches. As with other media events, it may be assumed that part of what makes them so attractive to audiences are the psychological, social, and sometimes national significance attributed to the events themselves and to the experience of watching them with others (Katz & Dayan, 1985; Katz, 1980; Rowe & Baker, 2012; Tamir, 2018).

In recent years, changes have taken place in television viewing patterns during live broadcasts of major events such as prominent sports matches. One of the most striking changes is the introduction of “second screens” that accompany viewing, usually tablets and smartphones. These devices affect the viewers’ attention, the information they receive, and their social conduct during the broadcast (Auverset, Billings, & Collin, 2016; Cunningham & Eastin, 2017; Gantz, Fingerhut, & Nadorff, 2012; Gil De Zúñiga, Garcia-Perdomo, & McGregor, 2015; Rowe & Baker, 2012).

The current study adds to the existing research literature in the field by examining viewing patterns and socialization during the live broadcast of major sports games. It considers the psychological meanings that may be attributed to viewing patterns that are accompanied by active use of the popular interpersonal and group messaging application, WhatsApp. Specifically, the study examines the use of smartphones and WhatsApp among Israeli viewers of the televised broadcasts of the 2018 World Cup games (from the quarter-finals onwards). This analysis uncovers psychological mechanisms at work in these circumstances and the connections between viewers’ level of engagement and enjoyment in watching the broadcast game while simultaneously using a smartphone as a second screen.

**Use of Second Screens When Watching Television Broadcasts**

Over the past few years, television viewing habits around the world have changed considerably. Among the most notable changes is the second screen phenomenon, watching television while using another digital device, usually a smartphone or tablet. Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2015) refers to the phenomenon of watching television while using another digital device in its broader context: “Second screening is a trending new media use that embodies one aspect of a phenomenon known as hybrid media (Chadwick, 2013) and highlights the ubiquity of social media and connectedness in modern life” (Gil de Zúñiga et al., p. 793).

Cuninngham and Eastin (2017, p. 289) expand the definition of the second screen to include its interaction with the television:

In most cases, the second screen is often a smartphone or tablet, where through use of an app, the audience is able to interact with a TV program in a different way. In this case, the tablet or smartphone becomes a TV companion device...the use of multiple screens offers new opportunities for interaction, additional touch points with audiences, direct transactions, and data gathering.

Klein-Shagrir (2018) points out that “the television’s liveness can be extended beyond the transmission itself by digital platforms and social networks in particular, which serve as a ‘second screen’” (p. 59). The essence of the second screen has not yet been defined by scholars. On a technological level, using a second screen allows viewers access to the content in ways that were previously beyond the scope of a television broadcast (watching behind-the-scenes content during commercials, sending text messages that affect content, etc.). However, beyond the public’s use and enjoyment of these technological advances (which are frequently reported on in follow-up surveys such as Nielsen and PEW), academic studies in the field refer to the second screen as a tool that increases parasocial relations with television (imagined interaction with the content that contains high emotional-cognitive engagement). For example, Sørensen (2016) argues that the second screen enriches and expands the viewing experience by providing statistics while watching sports.

Cunningham and Eastin (2017) add that the phenomenon of managing social interactions that occur around televisions through the use of secondary screens can be called “social television,” a term they define as: “Using communication technology to connect television viewers in order to create remotely shared experiences around television content” (p. 289).

This concept has been present in the research literature for more than a decade. It refers to attempts (mostly unsuccessful) to produce “smart” televisions that include applications encouraging interpersonal and group communication, and to the socio-cultural phenomenon that surrounds live television broadcasts of major events (Auverset et al., 2016; Harboe, Massey, Metcalf, Wheatley, & Romano, 2008; Shin, 2016). Winter, Krämer, Benninghoff, and Gallus (2018) found that communicating with partners while watching television, that is, situations of social TV, has a significant impact on the formation of viewers’ opinions on the content of the broadcasts, even at the expense of shaping an independent position or opinion. Auverset et al. (2016) links use of social television to the “fear of missing out.” In other words, the central motive they identified in the choice to take part in second-screen activities while watching live television broadcasts of major events was the fear of being “out of the loop” of the social discourse taking place around these broadcasts.

There is a gap in the research literature in the field about the scope of the dialogue among online social networks and the scope of the dialogue that takes place between the viewer and the television screen. The second screen can serve as a connection between the social dialogue and the viewing experience. Many studies have explored collaborative viewing experiences, such as Lemish’s (1985) pioneering research on students’ collaborative viewing in dormitories. Additionally, many studies have focused on fans’ use of ceremonial rituals of watching, including in the digital environment (for example, Jenkins, 2006). In order to establish the place of the smartphone as a second screen while watching the World Cup soccer matches as a way to interact with other viewers, the first research question in this study is:

Q1: To what extent do viewers of soccer matches use smartphones and their applications to communicate with their friends about the game they are watching?

**Using WhatsApp**

One of the most popular smartphone applications in recent years is WhatsApp. The number of users per month is estimated at 1.5 billion people worldwide (TechCrunch, 2018). The application enables users to send and receive text messages, video, and audio files via their smartphone at negligible cost. One of the distinctive features of WhatsApp relevant to the current study is its ability to enable multi-participant group communication, without limiting the number of groups in which a user is a member, the volume of activity, or the content of messages transmitted.

A study conducted among Israeli users of WhatsApp revealed the impressive scope of its use: 67% of respondents reported that they use WhatsApp for the purpose of sending personal messages on a daily basis (Malka, Ariel, & Avidar, 2015). High usage patterns were also found with regard to group WhatsApp messaging: 52% of the respondents sent group messages on a daily basis and about a quarter did so on a weekly basis. Another study, in which in-depth interviews were conducted with Israeli users of WhatsApp between the ages of 21-30, provides quantitative evidence of the centrality of this application in the lives of young people (Malka, Ariel, Avidar, & Levy, 2014). Most of the interviewees reported changes in their patterns of initiating, managing, and perpetuating romantic, social, familial, and professional relationships since the introduction of WhatsApp into their lives. When describing the characteristics of the application, the interviewees noted that, among other things, WhatsApp enables effective group activity for diverse family, social, and professional needs. This includes ad hoc purposes, managing long-term projects, maintaining connections between friends and family, and providing a convenient and user-friendly platform for sharing content of various types and contexts. In light of the centrality of the use of WhatsApp in Israel, and the great relevance of the application to the experience of viewing sports broadcast broadcasts in combination with a second screen, the second research question is:

Q2: Is there a difference in the use of WhatsApp in the context of the game compared with other smartphone applications in the context of the game?

According to Gil de Zúñiga et. al (2015), use of a second screen while watching political media events leads to increased engagement with those events. The motivation attributed to the use of a second screen in the circumstances under discussion is twofold: searching for relevant information, and participating in discussions and debates that occur during the broadcast and which directly relate to it (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2015). The similarity between political and sporting events that are broadcast live on television (especially as media confrontations and contests) suggest that using a second screen while watching major sports will lead to a similar effect as seen with political media events.

In recent years, the use of a second screen and its effects on the experience of viewing sports broadcasts has been examined from several perspectives. The first perspective concerns the stretching of the boundaries of the shared viewing experience beyond the circle of those who are physically present. The second pertains to the implications of the entry of new players into the familiar relationship between fans and the traditional broadcast media (Billings, Qiao, Conlin, & Nie, 2015; Cunningham & Eastin, 2017; Gantz et al., 2012; Girginova, 2015; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012; Phonthanukitithaworn & Sellitto, 2017; Rowe & Baker, 2012; Thorpe, 2017). Some researchers focus on the economic aspects of the second screen phenomenon during the televised broadcast of sports games (especially in the sense of the challenge for advertisers and other stakeholders to keep viewers’ attention). However, most of the research is devoted to the psychological, social, and cultural implications of the phenomenon (Auverset et al., 2016; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). For example, Gantz (2013) states that use of social media while watching sports broadcasts strengthens social ties and a sense of belonging, creates a platform for expression of a wide range of feelings, emotions, and opinions related to the game. It also increases the weight of importance of the sport within the viewer’s life in general. Phonthanukitithaworn and Sellitto (2017) note the strong emotional and behavioral influences of this phenomenon on sports fans. They argue that use of a second screen in these circumstances contributes to reinforcing feelings of fraternity and community among fans who are members of a social media group that interacts during the viewing time. Harboe et al. (2008) find that the social television phenomenon is especially prevalent surrounding the broadcast of major sports events, although, according to these researchers, the strengthening of social ties in these situations occurs mainly in cases in which the people were previously acquainted.

**The Experience of Watching Sporting Events**

Studies of sports and media that focus on fans’ experience of watching televised games tend to emphasize the social dimension of viewing, and the unifying effect of fans gathering to watch their favorite team. Whether the situation involves viewing with family and friends at home, watching a large screen in a bar or and cafe, or workplace frameworks that allow for shared viewing of major sports, the possibility of sharing the viewing experience with other fans is seen as the most meaningful aspect for viewers (Auverset et al., 2016; Gantz, 2013; Gantz et al., 2012; Harboe et al., 2008; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012; Knobloch-Westerwick, David, Eastin, Tamborini, & Greenwood, 2009; Tamir, 2018).

Researchers tend to regard live televised broadcasts of sports events that are particularly important nationally or internationally as media events in every aspect (Tamir, 2018). According to the classic definition formulated by Katz and Dayan (1985), “media events” are broadcast live, override normal viewing routines, and have unusually high viewing rates with distinctive communal patterns of viewing. The researchers distinguish three subtypes of media events: contests, conquests, and coronations. Contests or confrontations are media events of a competitive nature, usually in the field of sports or politics, which are conducted in accordance with established rules of the game. In such events, the main tension that characterizes the viewer revolves around the question, “Who will win?” Viewers of this type of media event experience a sense of belonging to a large-scale imagined audience that emphasizes their membership in a society, nation, or other general framework. Cunningham and Eastin (2017) find that the more important, interesting, and dramatic the broadcast game is, the greater the tendency to use a second screen, especially among more loyal fans, whose level of engagement with the group is high in the first place. Referring to the feeling of involvement associated with engagement, the researchers determine that “This sense of involvement should translate from the first screen to the second screen” (p. 293).

Exposure to the media in general and television viewing in particular evokes in the viewer psychological mechanisms such as identification, empathy, involvement, and being emotionally carried away (Tukachinsky & Tokunaga, 2013). The current study focuses on the mechanism of engagement and the enjoyment that accompany watching television. The viewer’s engagement refers to the attention the viewer pays to the message. Media psychologists have offered a number of terms to describe this feeling of absorption in a narrative, including transportation (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004; Mazzocco, Green, Sasota, & Jones, 2010), immersion (Neuendorf & Lieberman, [2010](http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=ee15035d-0fb4-4cc3-a9d1-b6b49c71e534%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#bib44); Rose, 2012), engagement (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2008; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009), flow (Nabi & Green, [2015](http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=ee15035d-0fb4-4cc3-a9d1-b6b49c71e534%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl" \l "bib43)), and presence (Neuendorf & Lieberman, [2010](http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=ee15035d-0fb4-4cc3-a9d1-b6b49c71e534%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#bib44)).

Viewers often feel a sense of engagement with a message when they identify with it (Cohen, 2006). Engagement has been conceptualized as having a behavioral and emotional structure (Jacques, Preece, & Carey, 1995). In the context of interaction between the audience and the content, Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) argue that engagement has benefits for both sides in the communication process, the audience and the industry. Quesenbery (2003) adds that users’ engagement in the digital environment is strongly correlated with their level of satisfaction with the technological platform. Emotional engagement involves three levels of processing. The first is the immediate and direct level, which includes positive or negative emotions (such as laughter or excitement). The second level involves deeper meta-cognitive and psychosocial processes (Frijda, 1986; Gross, 1999; Lazarus, 1991). The third level involves further reassessment of media-related experiences that are particularly meaningful in the long-term, after the viewing experience (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010).

Consumption of media is often a pleasant and positive experience (Bosshart & Macconi, 1998; Zillmann & Bryant, 1994). According to Krcmar and Renfro (2005), to describe enjoyment, researchers use concepts such as appreciation, attraction, preference, and liking. Enjoyment is the result of the combination of psychological, emotional, and cognitive components (Davidson, 2003). Green and Brock (2000) emphasize the similarity between flow, transportation, and engagement, and state that engagement is a pleasant experience.

Most sports fans tend to be emotionally invested in broadcasted events (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012; Gantz, 2013; Tamir, 2018). Therefore, it is only natural for them to want to share their expectations, excitement, joy, and disappointment in real time with their peers. Using a second screen during the broadcast allows fans to communicate with each other even when they are unable to view it in a shared physical space (Gantz et al., 2012). Therefore, the third research question is:

Q3: To what extent is the relationship between engagement (emotional and behavioral) and enjoyment from watching the game mediated by using a smartphone (a) in the context of the game (b) in a context other than the game?

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The questionnaire was completed by 454 respondents aged 18 and over. 58% of them were men and 42% were women. The sample of respondents was obtained from an online panel that was representative of the distribution of the Israeli population according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. The maximum standard error is 4.5%.

**Research Tool**

The research questions were examined through a structured questionnaire that included 60 closed questions. The questionnaire included the following variables:

**Independent variables.** In order to assess engagement (general engagement), we used a 15-item scale (α = .95) rated from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements regarding engagement in general (e.g. “My eyes are focused on the screen as if I’m hypnotized”; “My pulse increases while viewing the game”).

The engagement variable was split into two sub-variables:

*Behavioral engagement*: This was measured using a 9-item scale (α = .92) rated from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements (e.g., “I prepare the environment in which I watch the game (symbols, refreshments, drinks),” “I increase / decrease the volume of the game broadcast”).

*Emotional engagement*: This was measured with a 6-item scale (α = .91) rated from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements (e.g., “I can feel the players while watching the game”; “When I watch the game my body is at home but my head is on the field”).

**Dependent variable.** In order to assess enjoyment, we used a 4-item scale (α = .97) rated from 1, severely disagree to 5, strongly agree. Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements (e.g., “I enjoy watching soccer games”; “I am happy when I watch soccer games”).

**Mediating variables**. To assess *game-related* *second screen use* we used a 7-item scale (α = .89) rated from 1, strongly disagree to 5, strongly agree. Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements (e.g., “I write WhatsApp messages about the game”, “I call friends who watch the game to share experiences from the game”). To assess *non-game-related* *second screen use* we used a 4-item scale (α = .69) rated from 1, strongly disagree to 5, strongly agree. Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements (e.g., “I answer phone calls”; “I reply to WhatsApp messages that are not on the topic of the game”).

**Research Process**

The questionnaire was distributed during the final ten days of the World Cup, from the quarterfinals to the final. Following a filter question – “Do you watch the World Cup soccer matches?” – respondents were sent the questionnaire for completion. The final sample included only questionnaires that were completely correctly by end of the survey and after verifying the completion time.

**Results**

The results revealed a medium degree of engagement (M = 2.98, SD = 0.95) on a scale of 1-5. A paired samples t-test revealed a significant difference in behavioral engagement and emotional engagement *t*(438) = 14.96, *p* < .001. Thus, the level of behavioral engagement (M = 2.62, SD = 0.99) was significantly higher than that of emotional engagement (M = 2.20, SD = 1.03). Moreover, the level of enjoyment from watching soccer games was relatively high (M = 4.79, SD = 1.60) on a scale of 1-5.

In addition, a paired samples t-test revealed a significant difference between the use of a second screen in game-related use and non-game-related use *t*(444) = 9.90, *p* < .001. The level of second screen game-related use was significantly higher (M = 3.24, SD = 1.10) than the level of second screen non-game-related use (M = 2.62, SD = 1.01) (see Table 1)

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **N** | **Mean (SD)** | **Range** |
| General engagement | 439 | 2.38 (0.95) | 1 - 4.93 |
| Emotional engagement | 439 | 2.20 (1.03) | 1-5 |
| Behavioral engagement | 439 | 2.62 (0.99) | 1-5 |
| Enjoyment | 442 | 4.79 (1.68) | 1-7 |
| Second screen use |   |   |   |
| Game-related use | 445 | 2.62 (1.01) | 1-5 |
| Non-game-related use | 445 | 3.24(1.13) | 1-5 |

**Examining the Research Questions**

To examine the first research question (Q1), a statistical analysis was conducted describing the distribution of responses regarding the use of the smartphone. Results show that 51% of the respondents report that they regularly view the World Cup games (referred to here as “heavy viewers”) and another 25% watch the games in part (referred to as “light viewers”). In addition, 36% of respondents would want to watch more games if their personal schedule would allow it. Half of the respondents (51%) do not have a favorite soccer team, and only 13% define themselves as fans of a particular soccer team.

As for the viewing patterns, 51% say that “viewing games is most enjoyable when done with others” and only 5% made the opposite claim that “watching a soccer game is better alone”. In terms of activities other than watching the game, 53% received and answered phone calls during the broadcast, and 29% initiate phone calls on their own, and 12% made phone calls to discuss game-related issues. Similarly, more than half of the respondents (52%) responded to WhatsApp messages sent to them while watching the game, and 30% initiated a WhatsApp message while watching the game. In addition, 15% of the respondents sent a picture using WhatsApp during the game.

A comparison of light viewers and heavy viewers, regarding their WhatsApp activities while watching the game, reveals a significant difference in WhatsApp game-related activities (t(443) = 4.91, *p* < .001). Heavy viewers (M = 2.84, SD = 1.02) utilized a second screen for more of these activities than light viewers (M = 2.38, SD = .95). In contrast, a comparison of light viewers and heavy viewers regarding their second screen non-game-related activities reveals (t(443) = 6.37, *p* < .001) that light viewers perform more non-game-related activities (M = 3.58, SD = 1.10), than do the heavy viewers (M = 2.92, SD = 1.07).

In order to examine the differences between WhatsApp and other smartphone uses (Q2), a paired samples t-test was conducted. It revealed a significant difference: use of WhatsApp was higher (M = 2.62, SD = 1.01) than other smartphone uses (M = 2.26, SD = 1.03).

In order to examine the third research question (Q3), a Pearson test was conducted, and the correlation between general engagement and enjoyment was found to be significant, positive, and strong (r = .723, p < .001). As the level of engagement rose, the level of enjoyment rose, and vice versa. A similar pattern was found when we separately examined the correlation between emotional engagement (r = .664, p < .001) and behavioral engagement (r = .728, p < .001) with enjoyment (see Table 2).

Table 2. Correlations between Research Variables

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Behavioral engagement | Emotional engagement | Enjoyment | Non-game related use | Game-related use |
| General engagement | .953\* | .954\* | .723\* | -.389\* | .320\* |
| Behavioral engagement |   | .826\* | .728\* | -.381\* | .303\* |
| Emotional engagement |   |   | .664\* | -.377\* | .305\* |
| Enjoyment |   |   |   | -.348\* | .314\* |
| Non-game related use |   |   |   |   | .232\* |

\*p < .001

In order to examine the mediating role of second screen use in the relationship between the engagement and enjoyment (Q3), we used Hayes’ (2018) PROCESS bootstrapping command with 5,000 iterations (model 4). The analysis treated engagement as a predictor variable, game-related use as the first mediator, non-game-related use as the second mediator, and enjoyment as the dependent variable.

Results showed that the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of engagement on enjoyment through second screen use did not include 0 (95% CI [-.007, -.012] with 5,000 resamples. Moreover, results also showed that the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of engagement on enjoyment through game-related use did not include 0 (95% CI [.127, .373] with 5,000 resamples. Additionally, the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of engagement on enjoyment through non-game-related use did not include 0 (95% CI [-.323, -.097] with 5,000 resamples, F(3,435) = 173.12, p < .001, Rsq = 54.42%). In other words, a serial mediation in two paths were found: one passes through game-use and simultaneously a mediation path through non-game-related use. These two paths were found to be significant. The model indicates indirect effects of engagement on enjoyment (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Mediating Model of Engagement and Enjoyment

**Discussion**

This study examines meanings of using a smartphone as a second screen, in particular the use of the WhatsApp smartphone application while watching the televised broadcast of a major sports event, namely the 2018 soccer World Cup. Watching live television broadcasts, especially of significant events, is often a social activity undertaken with friends and / or family members (McDonald, 1986). Many viewers report that their enjoyment is greater when watching is shared (Wilson & Weiss, 1993). The findings of the current study show that most viewers prefer to watch the broadcast of a major soccer game together: 77% of respondents agree to a great or very great extent with the statement, “It is most fun to watch a soccer match with friends.” Moreover, similar to recent global trends regarding viewing patterns (Chadwick, 2013; Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2015), the study also found that co-viewing is not necessarily done in the physical presence of others. Most of the study participants reported that while watching soccer games, they answered phone calls and wrote group and interpersonal WhatsApp messages, both on the subject of the game and on other subjects. However, the findings show that the vast majority of viewers use their smartphone in general and WhatsApp in particular for the purpose of discussing topics directly related to the game. These findings are especially true for regular sports viewers, who are more likely to make use of the second screen for game-related matters than are the occasional viewers. The distinctive features of the WhatsApp application, particularly the speed and efficiency of transferring content of any kind, and the ability to communicate synchronously with friends and partners, make it a very effective means of creating a shared viewing experience, even when members are not sharing a common physical space.

The main findings of this study deal with the effects of using WhatsApp while watching the World Cup games on television, and particularly its impact on the level of engagement with and enjoyment of the game. The findings indicate that there is a connection between the viewer’s engagement with the game and enjoyment of watching the broadcast. Further, this relationship is mediated through the use of a smartphone as a second screen, and especially use of WhatsApp. However, the nature of the connection depends on the relevance of the content transmitted to the broadcast. When the messages transmitted between viewers during the broadcast relate to the game, there is a positive correlation between the levels of engagement, enjoyment, and use of WhatsApp. In contrast, when the messages relate to matters other than the game, there is a negative correlation between these variables.

According to the theory of transportation (Gerrig, 1993; Green & Brock, 2000), the audience is supposed to be swept away by the unfolding plot, such that all their attention is directed toward the observed events. However, according to the findings of this study, the second screen may in fact distract attention away from the observed event and impair viewers’ engagement and the extent to which they are drawn into what they are watching. Nevertheless, a second screen may create and contribute to enjoyment, if its use pertains to the subject of the game.

The current research contributes to existing research literature on the use of a second screen when viewing sports broadcasts and the effects that can be attributed to it, by focusing on the implications of using the personal and group messaging application, WhatsApp. While previous studies examined use of a second screen to collect information relevant to the game, or to enable communication between fans and viewers who do not necessarily know each other (Cunningham & Eastin, 2012, 2017; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012), the current study focuses on use of WhatsApp among viewers of the World Cup matches who were previously friends or acquaintances. This study shows the extent to which game-related communication using WhatsApp contributes to a meaningful collaborative viewing experience, the degree of engagement with the game, and the extent to which it is enjoyed. In this sense, research contributes to our understanding of the positive effects that can be attributed to use of a second screen when watching television broadcasts of major events, at least in terms of the viewing experience.

**Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research**

While the study makes a distinct contribution, nevertheless a number of limitations should be noted. The study only examines the effect of using a second screen while watching the World Cup soccer matches, starting with the quarterfinals. Results may differ in the context of people watching games that are deemed less important. For comparison, further studies should examine the model proposed in this study among viewers of minor sporting events.

The present study focuses on the case of Israeli viewers. Israel did not have a team competing in the 2018 World Cup soccer games. As the study findings show, for most of the surveyed respondents, viewing these games was for general enjoyment only. Most did not have a clear preference for one of the teams. As noted, half of the respondents said they do not have a favorite soccer team and only 13% defined themselves as fans of a particular soccer team. Accordingly, this study should be extended to include viewers from countries that are active participants in the World Cup and to fans of teams participating in the World Cup. Future studies may even compare the behavior of fans during the broadcast of games involving “their” team as compared to when they are watching games in which their preferred team is not playing.

It would be beneficial for follow-up studies to examine the question of whether the main finding of this study – that use of a smartphone as a second screen in general and WhatsApp in particular contributes to the engagement with and enjoyment of the broadcast game – is valid in other circumstances. These might include viewing other genres of television content, watching content that is not being broadcast live, and more. In addition, future research may consider viewers who have a socio-economic profile that differs from that of the majority of viewers of soccer games.

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