

From Scroll to Stadium: Understanding Fans' Engagement Behavior in the Digital Sports Era

Syed Zaki Abbas Shah¹ Muhammad Amin²

¹ PhD Scholar, Department of Business Administration, Iqra University, Islamabad Campus, Pakistan.

Email: szakiabbas@gmail.com

² PhD Scholar, Department of Business Administration, Iqra University, Islamabad Campus, Pakistan.

Email: amin.wraich@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), this study investigates the mediating role of attitude toward online sports viewing in the relationship between convenience and online sports viewership behavior among users of high-definition (HD) mediated sports applications. Despite the rise in the digital sports viewership trend, the psychological pathway connecting convenience to viewership behavior is still not understood, especially in developing nations like Pakistan. A structured, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was applied to gather information from 1,080 Pakistani sports enthusiasts using a quantitative, cross-sectional methodology. PLS-SEM was used for analysis. The findings show that attitude toward online sports viewing is strongly and favorably influenced by convenience ($\beta = .236$, $p < .001$), which in turn significantly predicts online sports viewing behavior ($\beta = .668$, $p < .001$).

KEYWORDS: Social Mediated Applications, Sports Fans, Uses & Gratification Theory

Introduction

Due to rapid technological innovation, high-definition (HD) mediated sports applications have emerged and penetrated into the lives of sports fans. These applications include mobile sports applications, online streaming platforms, over-the-top services, sports websites, and other digital platforms through which users can access sports content. This innovation has transformed how audiences watch sports and related content, allowing them instant access to live matches, highlights, and real-time updates without the need to visit stadiums (Jang et al., 2025). These technological advancements provide greater user-friendliness and flexibility of these platforms, which is termed convenience, and has emerged as a central construct of the paradigm shift, permitting the fans to view their favorite sports whenever it best suits their schedules, eliminating the time and effort required to attend matches in person.

Previous studies have explored the adoption and use of mediated applications, live-streaming quality, user satisfaction, and attitudinal behaviors in digital media environments. However, limited attention has been given to the psychological pathway through which convenience impacts sports fans' attitude formation and, ultimately, leads towards online sports viewership behavior in HD-mediated sports applications (Kareem et al., 2024). The study examines the theoretical underpinnings of UGT in connection with mediated sports usage to investigate the research question, positioning convenience as a key gratification within the UGT framework.

Pages: 216 – 223

Volume: 5

Issue: 5 (May 2026)

Corresponding Author

Syed Zaki Abbas Shah

✉ szakiabbas@gmail.com

Cite this Article: Shah, S. Z. A., & Amin, M. (2026). From Scroll to Stadium: Understanding Fans' Engagement Behavior in the Digital Sports Era. *The Regional Tribune*, 5(5), 216-223.

<https://doi.org/10.55737/trt/v-v.257>

Accordingly, the study aims to examine the influence of convenience on online sports viewership behavior through the mediating role of attitude toward online sports viewing. The objective is to investigate whether attitude mediates the relationship between convenience and online sports viewership behavior among users of these applications. Therefore, the study intends to respond to the following research question: *How does convenience influence online sports viewership behavior through attitude toward online sports viewing in the context of HD-mediated sports applications?*

Literature Review

The rapid advancement of internet technologies and internet-enabled devices has accelerated the adoption of digital applications, transforming how sports individuals access live and recorded sports content. These digital platforms have become an integral part of contemporary sports media consumption since they offer better convenience, accessibility, and fan engagement along with an immersive viewership experience. Previous research further suggests that convenience, content quality, accessibility, and enhanced user experience are among the key factors influencing fans' attitudes and continued engagement with digital sports viewing platforms (You et al., 2026).

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) posits audiences as active participants who behaviorally choose media to fulfil their psychological and social needs. Since its formulation in the 1940s, the theory has been widely applied to explain how media consumption is shaped by users' motivations and preferences (Symons et al., 2025). Consistent with this concept, audiences are engaged with the mediated applications for various reasons, including information seeking, spending their spare moments, getting entertainment, and interacting with others (Keum et al., 2023; Yang & Ha, 2021).

Grounded in UGT, this study proposes that sports viewers actively use HD-mediated sports applications to fulfil their needs for information seeking, entertainment, and leisure. Through flexible and on-demand access to live sporting competitions and related content, digital applications provide a more convenient viewing experience than traditional broadcasting medium including television or radio, and the time, travel, and logistical resources linked with stadium attendance. As UGT suggests, when users perceive that a medium successfully fulfils their desired gratifications, they are more inclined to create positive attitudes toward that medium, which subsequently influence their future behavior.

Convenience, Attitude, and Online Sports Viewership Behavior

Convenience here refers to the comfort and effectiveness with which spectators can view sports-related content through the sports-mediated platforms instead of sparing resources to attend sporting events in stadiums. These platforms enhance convenience by removing geographical barriers, reducing travel and waiting time, and providing flexible access, enabling viewers to watch sports whenever and wherever they choose (Siddiqui et al., 2025).

Among the various gratifications offered by digital media applications, convenience has emerged as one of the most important factors driving users' adoption of online platforms. Features such as on-demand accessibility, mobility, expert commentary, ease of navigation, and flexible viewing options enable digital sports consumers to watch sports content according to their preferred schedules (Jirakasemwat & Suttharattanakul, 2025). Consequently, convenience represents an important practical gratification that enhances users' experience with digital sports applications.

According to UGT, media that effectively satisfy users’ needs generate favorable attitudes toward the medium. In the context of digital sports applications, convenience serves as a key gratification that positively shapes users’ attitudes by providing easy and effortless access to sports-related content.

H1: Convenience positively influences attitudes toward online sports viewing.

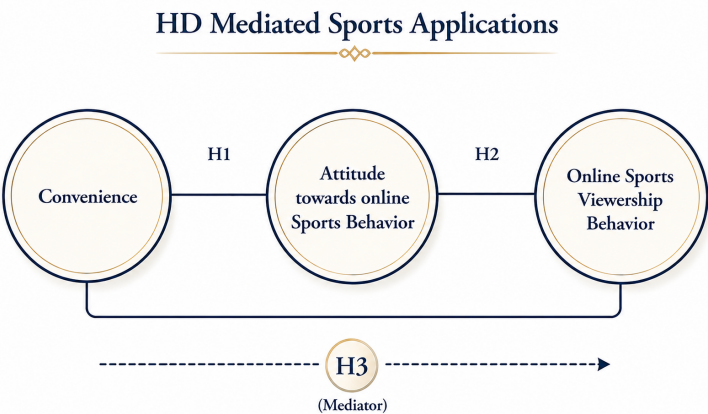
UGT further suggests that positive attitudes resulting from satisfying media experiences influence users’ behaviors to view sports through digital applications. Accordingly, positive attitudes toward online sports viewing are expected to strengthen online sports viewership behavior.

H2: Attitudes toward online sports viewing positively influence online sports viewership behavior.

UGT proposes that behavioral outcomes arise through the gratification process rather than from media features alone. In this study, convenience is conceptualized as a functional gratification that creates favorable attitudes toward online sports viewing, which subsequently enhance online sports viewership behavior.

H3: Attitudes toward online sports viewing mediate the relationship between convenience and online sports viewership behavior.

Figure 1
Research Framework Based on UGT



Methodology

Research Design

This study is quantitative in nature, and a cross-sectional research design is chosen to examine the proposed relationship among the study variables. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate as the research paper aims to test theoretically proposed relationships among clearly defined variables using arithmetical data gathered from Pakistan-based sports fans. The cross-sectional design enabled the researchers to get respondents’ reported viewing behavior at a specific timeframe.

The target population comprised sports fans in Pakistan who used these applications to watch live or recorded sports content. Since no reliable sampling frame or verified estimate of the total number of mediated sports application users in Pakistan was available, the target population was treated as large and unknown. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was applied to engage respondents who were easily accessible through online platforms, sports communities, educational institutions, and personal networks.

The data were collected from 1,080 participants to enhance statistical power and attain the accuracy and consistency of the PLS-Structural Equation Modeling estimations, despite the minimal sample size requirement of

384 respondents. Since they yield more accurate parameter estimates and improve the findings’ robustness and generalizability, larger sample sizes are advised (Kock & Hadaya, 2018).

Measurement Instrument

Data were collected using an organized questionnaire having two main sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender and age. The second section measured the three constructs included in the proposed model. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was used to measure all the variables.

Table 1
Summary of the Measurement Instrument

Construct	Role in the model	Number of items
Convenience	Independent variable	5
Attitude toward online sports viewing	Mediator	5
Online sports viewership behavior	Dependent variable	3
Total construct items		13

Before the main data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by academics and specialists in the field to ensure the wording precision, relevance, and content validity of measurement items. To determine the questionnaire's clarity and analyze the measurement instrument’s initial reliability, a pilot investigation with 40 participants was conducted. With Cronbach's alpha values fluctuating from 0.803 to 0.931 across the research components, the results presented good internal consistency. The instrument was deemed reliable for the primary survey since all results were higher than the proposed threshold of 0.70 (Taber, 2018), and the pilot responses were not included in the final data analysis.

Common Method Bias

Since data for all constructs were gathered from the same sample using a single survey, procedures to minimize the bias were applied to reduce the common method bias issue (Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2024). Respondents were guaranteed anonymity, the questionnaire was organized into separate sections, and the relationships among the study constructs were not disclosed to minimize measurement bias.

Table 2
Full Collinearity Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Assessment for Common Method Bias

Construct	Full Collinearity VIF
Convenience	1.283
Attitude toward online sports viewing	1.000
Online sports viewership behavior	1.000

The full collinearity VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 1.283, which are well below the recommended threshold of 3.3, indicating that common method bias is not a major concern in this study (Kock, 2015).

Data Analysis

The results of the study, based on information gathered from Pakistani spectators who utilize HD-mediated sports applications, are presented in this section. The section starts with a profile of the respondents’ demographics before

assessing the model to determine the constructs’ validity and reliability. The suggested links between variables are then examined by evaluating the structural model. In order to ascertain whether attitude toward online sports viewing mediates the association between convenience and online sports viewership behavior, mediation analysis is conducted in the end.

Demographic Analysis

Table 3

Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 1,080)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	677	62.7
	Female	403	37.3
	Total	1,080	100.0
Age	18–24 years	325	30.1
	25–32 years	411	38.1
	33–40 years	243	22.5
	41 years and above	101	9.4
	Total	1,080	100.0

The final dataset included responses from 1,080 respondents. The sample consisted of 37.3% female respondents and 62.7% male respondents. The major proportion of respondents (38.1%) was from the age group of 25 and 32, followed by those between the ages of 18 and 24 (30.1%), 33 and 40 (22.5%), and 41 and older (9.4%). These statistics reveal that youth and middle-aged sports fans were in the majority of the sample, suggesting that these age groups are the primary users of HD-mediated sports applications.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics (N=1080)

Construct	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Convenience	1,080	3.083	1.320
Attitude toward Online Sports Viewing	1,080	2.988	1.375
Online sports viewership behavior	1,080	3.079	1.495

As shown in Table 4, the mean ranged from 2.988 to 3.083, depicting that most respondents had moderate views about how the convenience of using HD-mediated sports apps is shaping their attitude to watch sports online. The standard deviation values, which varied from 1.320 to 1.495, showed sufficient variety for further structural equation modeling while also demonstrating a heterogeneity in respondents’ perceptions.

Measurement Model

Table 4

Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	α	CR	AVE
Convenience	0.938	0.953	0.802
Attitude toward Online Sports Viewing	0.961	0.967	0.809
Online Sports Viewership Behavior	0.935	0.959	0.885

Note: α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.708 and are therefore not reported individually.

The measurement model was evaluated by examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.708, ranging from 0.882 to 0.942. As shown in Table 4, Cronbach's alpha values were from 0.935 to 0.961, while composite reliability values were from 0.953 to 0.967, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Additionally, AVE values ranged from 0.802 to 0.885, which are above the recommended threshold of 0.50, confirming satisfactory convergent validity. The measurement model here demonstrates satisfactory reliability and convergent validity and is suitable for further evaluation.

Structural Equation Model

Table 5

Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	SE	t	p	Decision
H1	Convenience $\rightarrow$ Attitude toward Online Sports Viewing	.236	.026	9.10	<.001	Supported
H2	Attitude toward Online Sports Viewing $\rightarrow$ Online Sports Viewership Behavior	.668	.018	36.42	<.001	Supported

The structural model was evaluated by examining the hypothesized relationships among the study constructs. As shown in Table 5, convenience had a positive and statistically significant effect on attitude toward online sports viewing ($\beta = 0.236$, $t = 9.102$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Likewise, attitude toward online sports viewing positively influenced online sports viewership intention ($\beta = 0.668$, $t = 36.417$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H2.

Mediation Analysis

Table 6

Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Indirect Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H3	Convenience $\rightarrow$ Attitude toward Online Sports Viewing $\rightarrow$ Online Sports Viewership Behavior	0.157	8.641	<0.001	Supported

The mediating effect was measured using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The indirect effect of convenience on online sports viewership behavior through attitude toward online sports viewing was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.157$, $t = 8.641$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. These findings indicate that attitude toward online sports viewing serves as a significant mediating mechanism through which convenience enhances users' behavior to consume sports via HD-mediated sports applications.

Discussion

This study examined the influence of convenience on online sports viewership behavior through the mediating role of attitude toward online sports viewing within the framework of UGT. The findings supported all three proposed hypotheses. Particularly, convenience positively influenced attitude toward online sports viewing, indicating that sports fans who perceive HD-mediated sports applications as convenient and flexible are more inclined to hold favorable attitudes toward using these platforms. In turn, attitude toward online sports viewing significantly improved spectators' behavioral intentions to continue consuming sports content online.

Furthermore, the mediation analysis demonstrated that convenience has an indirect impact on online sports viewership behavior through attitude, confirming that users' evaluations of the viewing experience constitute a psychological mechanism connecting convenience with behavior. Above all, these findings support the usability of UGT in elaborating online sports viewership by demonstrating that convenience functions as a key gratification that shapes users' attitudes and subsequent behavior.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study encompasses the application of UGT by signifying that convenience is an important gratification influencing users' attitudes and subsequent online sports viewing behaviors. From a practical perspective, broadcasters and application developers should improve the convenience of HD-mediated sports applications by refining user-friendliness, flexibility, seamless streaming, and easy-to-navigate interfaces, thereby promoting positive user attitudes and continued user engagement.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study provides valuable insights, its cross-sectional research design limits the ability to draw causal inferences. The sample was limited to Pakistan-based sports fans only; for this reason, the generalizability of the findings can be affected. Finally, only convenience was inspected as the antecedent variable, whereas in future studies other gratification factors, including entertainment, information seeking, and social interaction can be incorporated. Further research should explore different cultural settings and adopt longitudinal research designs to improve understanding of online sports viewing behavior over time.

Conclusion

Overall, this study extends the application of UGT in the digital sports era by demonstrating the importance of convenience and attitude in explaining online sports viewership behavior, providing a base for future research in mediated sports usage.

References

- Jang, Y., Lim, S., & Lee, J. (2025). A study on the cognitive-consumption behavior of sports content on OTT media platforms: Applying the extended technology acceptance model (E-TAM). *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2025.1716007>
- Jirakasemwat, S., & Suttharattanagul, S. (2025). Exploring the Serial Mediation of Perceived Usefulness, Ease of Use, and Playfulness in Shaping Purchase Behavior in Live Streaming Commerce among Thai consumers. *ASEAN Journal of Management & Innovation*, 12(1), 93-108.
- Kareem, S. A., Venugopal, P., Yuvaraj, D., Priya, A. S., & Devi, A. S. (2024). Understanding continuance intention of subscription video-on-demand-based over-the-top (OTT) platforms: A multiple moderation approach. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Management Studies*, 17(3), 953–966.
- Keum, B. T., Wang, Y., Callaway, J., Abebe, I., Cruz, T., & O'Connor, S. (2023). Benefits and harms of social media use: A latent profile analysis of emerging adults. *Current Psychology*, 42(27), 23506-23518. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03473-5>
- Kock, N. (2015). Common method bias in PLS-SEM. *International Journal of e-Collaboration*, 11(4), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijec.2015100101>
- Kock, N., & Hadaya, P. (2018). Minimum sample size estimation in PLS-SEM: The inverse square root and gamma-exponential methods. *Information Systems Journal*, 28(1), 227-261. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12131>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Podsakoff, P. M., Podsakoff, N. P., Williams, L. J., Huang, C., & Yang, J. (2024). Common method bias: It's bad, it's complex, it's widespread, and it's not easy to fix. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 11(1), 17-61. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-110721-040030>
- Siddiqui, F. A., Zafar, H., & Naseem, A. (2025). The impact of social media marketing, content marketing and online convenience on consumer buying decision process in fashion apparel industry of Pakistan. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*, 3(1), 932-952. <https://doi.org/10.59075/wv5v1d03>
- Symons, K., Duncan, S., & Storr, R. (2025). Challenging the status quo of sports media: How fans use independent media to cover women's sports and advocate for change. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/edi-04-2024-0190>
- Taber, K. S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's Alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in Science Education*, 48(6), 1273-1296. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2>
- Yang, Y., & Ha, L. (2021). Why people use TikTok (Douyin) and how their purchase intentions are affected by social media influencers in China: A uses and gratifications and Parasocial relationship perspective. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 21(3), 297-305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2021.1995544>
- You, Y., Song, H., & Feng, Y. (2026). Examining the influence of user experience on functional value, satisfaction, and usage intention in OTT video platforms. *PLOS One*, 21(5), e0350557. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0350557>