

Microsoft

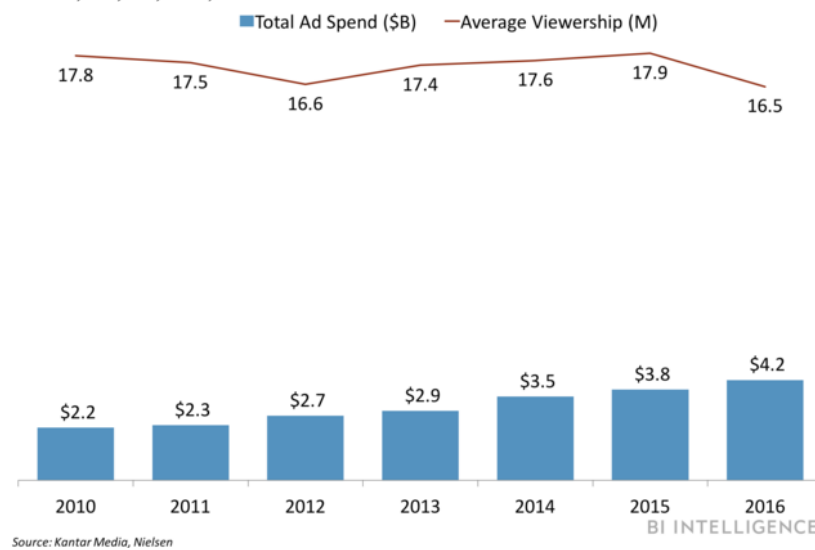
# “ NFL ad revenue is rising amid a ratings decline



- [Kevin Tran](#)
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## NFL Viewership & Ad Spend

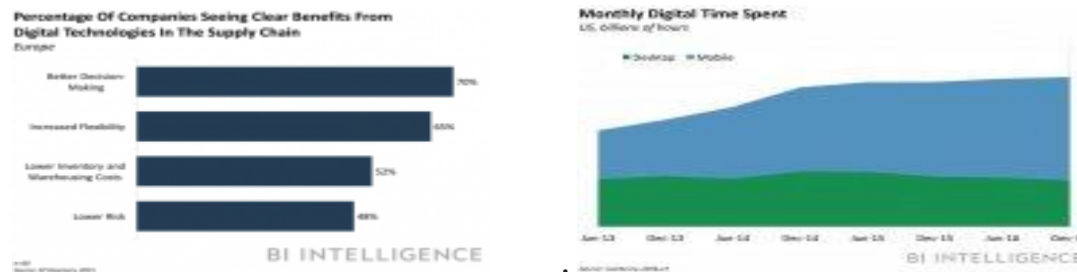
For NBC, CBS, Fox, ESPN, and NFL Network



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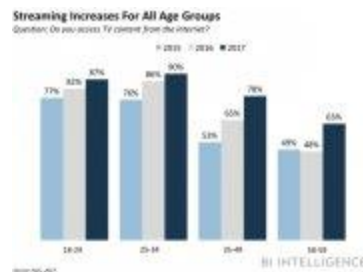
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Live sports compel viewers to keep pay-TV

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→ NFL ad revenue increased 2% YoY across all networks from September to November of this season, despite declining viewership, according to [Adweek](#). Average game viewership fell to [15 million](#) in early December, down from 16.5 million in the same month last year.

The trend is a continuation from earlier in the NFL season, when revenue increased 2% YoY in September, despite ratings falling 5%, according to Adweek.

NFL ad revenue continues to increase amid ratings declines because it's still one of the [biggest](#) ratings drivers on TV. More broadly speaking, live sports are one of the last bastions of TV viewership. Cord-cutting has hit [record numbers](#) in 2017, but live sports

remain a key reason consumers tune into pay-TV — 82% of traditional pay-TV subscribers would trim their subscription if they no longer needed it to view live sporting events, according to [PwC](#). Moreover, live sports accounted for 44 of TV's top 50 most-watched broadcasts in 2016, according to [AdAge](#).

And this is why declining NFL viewership isn't deterring companies from investing in acquiring NFL streaming rights. Verizon just committed to pay over \$2 billion over five years for the rights to stream NFL games on mobile devices for free. Amazon paid \$50 million for the rights to stream 10 Thursday Night Football games this season. In all, growing demand for NFL rights is contributing to the increasing value of sports media rights — fees paid to air sporting events on TV, the internet, and mobile devices. In North America, sports media rights are projected to reach \$23 billion in 2021, up from \$19 billion in 2017, according to [PwC](#).

Robert Elder, research analyst for [BI Intelligence](#), Business Insider's premium research service, has compiled [a detailed report on the digital disruption of live sports](#) that:

- Assesses the evolving live sports landscape.
- Examines how ESPN's business model is threatened by the decline of live sports.
- Profiles the promising new players in the space.
- Looks at what's next for legacy broadcasters. ”