

“Exploiting the entrepreneurial opportunities presented by a changing AFL television environment: Adopting a creative and innovative approach to television broadcasting.”

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Abstract

Sport is part of Australian culture, and for many Australians, participating in this aspect of culture involves watching professional sport live on television. However, the Australian broadcast market has been disrupted over the last 20 years by the arrival of global corporations, emerging broadcast technologies, changing consumption habits, and increasingly outdated regulation. In this context, this research project aims to specifically identify the major tensions that exist inside the broadcasting and digital sectors of an elite sport – the Australian Football League – and to explore how an entrepreneurial mindset might exploit the creative and innovative opportunities that arise from these tensions. Data from 37 participants and more than 70 documents articulated these tensions, which were interpreted through two theoretical frameworks capable of dealing with complex information. Specifically, the systems model of creativity and structuration theory provided a frame to allow the densely packed data to be disentangled, classified, and analysed, revealing the tensions and accordant opportunities. The concept of the ‘intrapreneur’ was also used to demonstrate how opportunities can be identified and exploited within large organisations such as commercial broadcasters and elite sports administrations. In applying these frames and concepts, this research project found the major tensions inside the AFL broadcasting and digital sectors are predominantly the result of conflict in and between public and commercial self-interests. These tensions can be found in and between each of the major choice making agents in the case study: the Australian Football League, their established and emerging broadcast partners, the regulators of the broadcasting sector, and the supporters who consume televised coverage of the game. Exploiting the opportunities in these tensions may involve realising commercial benefits or public benefits in contexts where either outcome is respectively valued. However, this is not an either/or proposition. Opportunities exist where public benefits may be realised in commercial contexts, and vice versa for public interest contexts, while some opportunities can deliver both public and commercial benefits, regardless of context. Identifying and exploiting such opportunities requires agents to develop an awareness of their context and the resources available, to increase the productive capacity of their network, to be resilient and take risks, to reframe constraints as enablers, and to be supported by senior leaders within their institution. These observations apply equally to consumers as they do to industry-based participants.

Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

Signed,

Edward Reddin

26 January 2022

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I acknowledge the Awabakal Nation, the traditional owners of the lands on which the Callaghan and NUSpace campuses of the University of Newcastle are located, and I acknowledge and pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations from which the university community is drawn.

An endeavour such as this essentially encapsulates 43 years of one's personal, professional, and familial life, making it difficult to know where to begin when recognising everything that went into it. Accordingly, the following acknowledgements are in no particular order, and in many ways do not adequately reflect the significance of their contribution. Inevitably, a line must also be drawn that limits these acknowledgements, therefore some parties who made significant contributions are not listed here. I will make it a duty to thank and acknowledge these people in time.

There is no way a project of this magnitude is completed without the guidance and perseverance of my supervisors, Associate Professor Susan Kerrigan, and Professor Phillip McIntyre. Legitimate titans in their field, they never failed to respond to my queries, no matter how large or small. They may not have the same passion for AFL as I do – few do – but they respected, stoked, and shared my enthusiasm, especially when I had my own concerns about the project. Susan was consistent, practical, and measured in her advice, and was so generous with her time. She could see I needed structure in my approach and provided it time and again over six years, and she never failed to cut the bullshit when needed. Phil's ability to ground the research and offer remarkable insight and perspective cannot be overstated. Creative industries research will be poorer whenever they leave the field.

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Several pieces of music on YouTube helped me find the cognitive space I needed to undertake the project. Almost every day would begin by listening to *Westworld Soundtrack – The Dr Ford's Piano Collections Part II: Chaos Takes Control*. This was followed by the various Westworld Soundtracks by Ramin Djawadi, and all the Radiohead piano covers by Josh Cohen.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the sport of Australian Football. Clearly my bias is showing, but I strongly believe it is the best game in the world to play and to watch. It is the reason for my health and fitness, my mental stimulation, my fandom, my friendships, and my identity. I believe people should be able to watch the game freely on television, so they can participate in Australian culture. I hope this enthusiasm comes across in the pages that follow.

List of Publications

I hereby declare the work embodied in this thesis generated the following publications.¹

Journal Articles (Refereed)

Reddin, E. (2017) "Cultural Citizenship, Social Utility, and Positive Network Externalities: The Role of Anti-Siphoning Legislation," *Platform: Journal of Media and Communication*, Vol. 8.2, pp53-67.

Conference Papers (Refereed Abstracts)

Reddin, E. (2017) "Speaking as a Producer: AFL Consumption in the Informal Media Economy," Fan Studies Network Australasia Conference, Wollongong, NSW, University of Wollongong, 30 November-1 December.

Reddin, E. (2018) "Footy on your phone?? Really... Why researching sport matters," FEDUA HDR Research Forum, Newcastle, NSW, University of Newcastle, 10 July.

Reddin, E. (2018) "The implications of a case study into the television coverage of the Australian Football League," School of Creative Industries HDR P3 Symposium, Newcastle, NSW, University of Newcastle, 26 & 27 September.

Reddin, E. (2019) "'When my children complain about Netflix not working, it's always 'Bloody Telstra' or 'Bloody Optus.' It's not 'Bloody Netflix,' right?" Understanding the barriers and catalysts for creating sustainability in sports broadcasting," FEDUA HDR Research Forum, Newcastle, NSW, University of Newcastle, 18 July.

Reddin, E. (2020) "Exploiting the entrepreneurial opportunities presented by a changing AFL television environment: Adopting a creative and innovative approach to television broadcasting," FEDUA HDR Research Forum, Newcastle, NSW, University of Newcastle, 7 July.

¹See Appendix 1 for abstracts of publications.

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Abbreviations

ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
AFL	Australian Football League
AFLFA	Australian Football League Fans Association
AFLPA	Australian Football League Players Association
AFLW	Australian Football League Women's
AFLX	Australian Football League "X" competition
ARPU	Average Revenue Per User
ASX	Australian Stock Exchange
BSA	<i>Broadcasting Services Act 1992</i>
BVOD	Broadcasting Video-on-Demand
CA	Cricket Australia
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
COMPPS	Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports
DTC	Direct-to-Consumer
EPL	English Premier League
EVS	Live production servers that enable fast turnaround of replays and highlights
FAANG	Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, Google
FTA	Free-to-Air broadcasting
GPS	Global Positioning System
IP	Intellectual Property
IPTV	Internet Protocol Television
ISP	Internet Service Provider
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NAB	National Australia Bank
NBA	National Basketball Association
NFL	National Football League
NHL	National Hockey League
OB	Outside Broadcast
OTT	Over-the-Top broadcasting
PCM	Psychological Continuum Model
PTV	Pay Television broadcasting
RFP	Request for Proposal
SME	Small-to-Medium Enterprises
STU	Set-Top-Unit
SVOD	Subscription Video-on-Demand
SWM	Seven West Media
UGC	User-Generated Content
VFL	Victorian Football League
VOD	Video-On-Demand
VPN	Virtual Private Network

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