

For viewers, Sochi will be first 'fully mobile' Olympics

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The Sochi Winter Olympics, Feb. 7-23, are expected to generate a dramatic rise in Web and mobile viewing, but that does not mean viewers will abandon the traditional television-viewing experience for digital media, says a communication professor from The University of Akron. In fact, the opposite is true—TV benefits from social media viewing.

Tang Tang, an assistant professor of communication at UA who studies audiences' multiplatform media experiences during big sporting events, expects Sochi will be the first "fully mobile Olympics," as more [viewers](#) rely on phones and tablets to stream live events, access sports news and highlights, participate in [social media](#) and view less-popular "niche" sports, such as curling.

But she is quick to add that people will not be ditching the [television screen](#) for the computer monitor or mobile device. Tang and her coauthor, Roger Cooper of Ohio University, found that those who viewed the 2012 London Summer Olympics on multiple platforms—often simultaneously—reported spending significantly more time watching [television](#) coverage than those whose experience was limited to the television screen.

"Digital use of Olympic content both broadened and individualized viewers' traditional television experience and, therefore, will become an increasing trend for Olympics viewing and continue to impact the audience's mega sporting event experiences," Tang says. "Digital media

does not diminish interest in traditional television—it enhances it."

In fact, the 2012 London Olympics—which offered U.S. viewers an unprecedented 5,500 hours of coverage across TV, web and mobile platforms—were not only the largest online, social media and mobile event in U.S. history, they were also the most-watched television event, attracting 219.4 million viewers, Tang says.

She explains that the Olympics are less of a sports experience and more of a social event, and that television is better suited for group viewing than [digital media](#).

Moreover, the Olympics attract both sports fans and non-sports fans alike, and people of all ages, genders and ethnic groups, Tang adds.

She suggests that, during the Olympics, national identity trumps other forms of identity, uniting people in a common feeling of patriotism.

The Olympics also attract more female viewers than most sporting events, Tang adds, because it offers more balanced coverage of women athletes, features more gender-neutral sports and provides an opportunity to spend time with family and friends.

Tang plans to conduct more research on multiplatform media uses, especially social media, for the Sochi Winter Olympics.

Provided by University of Akron

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