

The NFL as a Platform Economy: Value Creation, Network Effects, and the Economics of Fan Monetization

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On my honor as a University Student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment as defined by the Honor Guidelines for Thesis-Related Assignments

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Introduction

Over the past decade, the U.S. sports industry has exploded in scale and capital circulation. Contracts and prize purses have soared to levels that even lifelong fans never imagined. Shohei Ohtani's 10-year, \$700 million deal with the Dodgers has redefined the market. On the NFL side, Dallas Cowboys Quarterback Dak Prescott is earning \$60 million in 2026, earning at a pace that surpasses what Tom Brady made at his peak of \$25 million a year. Prize money for major events in Golf and Tennis has nearly doubled in just a few years.

As a fan, I see this expansion everywhere. Many of my college friends gamble on games, sharing referral links to earn bonus bets. Watching sports has also become more fragmented and expensive. What used to be a simple cable subscription now requires multiple streaming services, even basic access demands additional fees. At the same time, new billion-dollar stadiums continue to rise across the country, such as the \$1.6 billion Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. Sports are no longer just entertainment; they have become a massive global business shaping media, technology, and consumer culture.

Yet this growth raises a deeper question. With all this money, attention, and government investment flowing into professional sports, are these leagues actually generating value for society and the economy? We clearly spend billions on them, but are we, as a nation, getting a meaningful return on that investment? My research seeks to answer this question by examining how much added value the NFL produces for the United States economy and society, and whether that value justifies the public subsidies and antitrust law exceptions the league receives.

A significant body of economic research concludes that professional sports teams generate little measurable economic benefit for their local economies, and that public stadium subsidies rarely produce the returns policymakers promise (Bradbury et al., 2022). However,

these conclusions are largely based on pre-digital economic frameworks that do not account for the transformation of sports into a media-driven industry. While traditional models focus on localized economic impact, they fail to capture the NFL's role in national broadcasting markets, digital platforms, and large-scale audience engagement. The modern NFL operates within a fundamentally different environment, where value is generated not only through local spending but through national and digital systems of distribution. This paper argues that when these factors are incorporated, the NFL functions as a technology-integrated economy that produces substantial economic and social value, challenging traditional assessments of its impact and supporting the case for its continued institutional advantages. This paper argues that the NFL operates as a platform-based economic system that generates substantial value through media, technology, and network effects, but that these same structures create incentives for increasing multi-layer value extraction, raising questions about long-term sustainability.

To evaluate this claim, I collected both direct financial data and indirect economic indicators at the national and local levels, focusing on how the NFL generates measurable value through direct revenue, technological infrastructure, and economic spillover effects. This information was drawn from financial reports, industry articles, executive interviews, and data platforms such as Yahoo Finance and Forbes.

Background and context

Prior to the rise of mass media and modern technology, sports operated as a local business. Revenue heavily depended on ticket sales and in-stadium concessions, meaning the physical capacity of stadiums limited growth of sports profitability. Teams were constrained by

geography and the population of those places. Sports did not become a massive industry because the games themselves changed. They became one because technology and public policy continuously expanded how sports could be distributed and monetized.

Radio broadcasting in the 1920s first allowed games to reach mass audiences beyond the stadium. Radio helped create regional and eventually national fan bases. For the first time, sports became scalable and monetized through sponsorships. Television further transformed the industry by turning sports into entertainment content. On May 17, 1939, the first live televised sporting event in the United States, a college baseball game between Columbia University and Princeton University, unlocked the commercial potential of visual broadcasting (NBC Sports, 2019). The first televised sports advertisement aired on July 1, 1941, when Bulova Watch Company paid \$9 for a 10-second spot before a Brooklyn Dodgers game, marking the beginning of advertising as a major revenue engine (Fortune, 2016).

The Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961 solidified this transformation by allowing leagues like the NFL to sell media rights collectively (Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1291–1295). As a result, the NFL operates under a unique legal framework that permits coordinated behavior among teams. This includes shared broadcasting agreements and revenue pooling, practices that would typically violate antitrust laws in other industries. This policy dramatically increased media deal values and shifted sports to a media-driven business. The launch of ESPN on September 7, 1979, and the rise of cable television introduced a subscription-based revenue model, providing leagues with stable and predictable income (ESPN Press Room, 1979). Sports became a daily entertainment content rather than isolated weekly events, which dramatically increased both exposure and media rights competition.

Global broadcasting in the 1990s expanded sports beyond national markets, transforming leagues into international entertainment properties. Advances in satellite television and global media distribution enabled leagues to reach worldwide audiences, expanding merchandise sales, sponsorships, and global broadcasting deals.

The digital era added an additional layer of commercialization. The internet, smartphones, and streaming platforms removed viewing constraints entirely. Sports became on-demand and mobile, and leagues grew increasingly dependent on data analytics. Leagues gained access to detailed consumer analytics, while fans gained constant access to highlights, commentary, and social media interaction. This digital accessibility increased fan interaction, data collection, and new monetization channels such as online content, fantasy sports, and targeted advertising.

A major modern turning point came in 2018, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act in *Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association*, effectively legalizing sports betting nationwide (Murphy v. NCAA, 584 U.S. 453, 2018). The decision led to rapid growth of online sportsbooks and new partnerships between leagues and betting companies. It introduced a powerful new revenue stream while significantly increasing fan engagement and viewership. More recently, the erosion of the NCAA's amateurism model through Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policies has commercialized college athletics, expanding the overall economic footprint of organized sports.

Over the past couple decades, professional sports in the United States have become a significant economic and cultural force in modern life. Franchise valuations, player salaries, and media rights deals have reached historic highs, while public subsidies and legal exemptions continue to sustain league growth. Major leagues such as the NFL and MLB operate like

coordinated cartels. They negotiate collectively, restrict market entry, and pool broadcasting rights, yet they face little to no antitrust scrutiny. The government's willingness to tolerate these monopolistic behaviors suggests that sports leagues are not just entertainment businesses, but strategic instruments of cultural and economic policy.

State and local governments frequently subsidize stadium construction and surrounding infrastructure through public funding, tax incentives, and long-term development agreements. These projects often involve billions of dollars in combined public and private investment, with taxpayers covering substantial portions of infrastructure, transportation, and utility costs.

Methods & Theoretical framework

This study uses methods to evaluate the economic and social value generated by the NFL. The approach combines financial and economic data with qualitative media and institutional information to capture both direct and indirect forms of value creation. The NFL operates as a complex system that incorporates media, infrastructure, and social engagement, and no single category of data can represent its full impact. Therefore, this research integrates multiple categories of data to construct a comprehensive understanding of how the NFL generates and distributes value across the economy and society.

Financial data from NFL franchises were collected to estimate direct monetary output. These data include franchise valuations, annual revenue figures, ticket pricing, and attendance levels. Most NFL teams are privately owned, with the Green Bay Packers as the sole exception. Detailed financial disclosures such as Form 10-K filings are not publicly available. As a result, this study relies on publicly available sources including Yahoo Finance, Forbes, and industry

reports to compile financial estimates. While the research considers league-wide patterns, it also focuses on the New England Patriots as a case study to provide a picture of financial data at the team level. Additional revenue streams, including sponsorships, naming rights agreements, concessions, merchandise, and parking, were incorporated to provide a more complete representation of team-level financial activity.

To capture the NFL's role within the media and broadcasting economy, I collected data on broadcasting contracts, advertising prices per broadcast slot, and average viewership metrics. These were obtained from industry reports, financial disclosures, and media analytics platforms. I also used executive interviews and insights from organizations such as ESPN to understand how NFL content is created and distributed. Beyond media data, I incorporated economic indicators – including Bank of America spending data, stadium attendance figures, and local economic activity metrics – to examine the relationship between media exposure and consumer spending. Finally, technology and infrastructure data such as energy consumption, digital engagement metrics, and sports streaming market projections were included to capture the technological systems that support NFL operations. Together, these sources provide a multi-dimensional picture of how the NFL is integrated into media, technology, and local economic systems.

The scope of this research is intentionally focused on measurable economic indicators and observable forms of community engagement within local economies. It does not include primary data collection on social or psychological benefits associated with sports consumption. While there is substantial academic literature demonstrating that professional sports contribute to emotional well-being, community identity, and social cohesion, these effects are not directly measured within this study. Instead, this research relies on secondary sources and existing

literature to contextualize these social dimensions, which will be incorporated later in the analysis to support broader arguments about societal impact.

This study is grounded in STS concepts that frame the NFL as a sociotechnical system. The league's current structure is heavily dependent on technological infrastructures, particularly broadcasting networks and digital media platforms, which enable interaction between physical stadiums, media systems, and audience participation. These interconnected systems contribute to economic multiplier effects. Primary NFL-related spending generates secondary economic activity, including local job creation, increased regional spending, and expansion of the media ecosystem.

The NFL's media ecosystem can be understood through the concept of two-sided markets, where a platform facilitates interactions between two distinct user groups whose value depends on one another. In the NFL, television networks operate as platforms connecting viewers and advertisers. As viewership increases, the value of the platform to advertisers rises, allowing networks to charge higher advertising prices. This reflects indirect network effects, where growth on the viewer side increases value on the advertiser side (Rochet & Tirole, 2003). At the same time, platforms exhibit asymmetric pricing, often subsidizing viewers through relatively low subscription costs while extracting greater value from advertisers. This framework helps explain why live sports, particularly the NFL, have high media rights and advertising revenues. They reliably aggregate large audiences, strengthening the network effects that drive the system.

Findings & analysis

From Stadiums to Screens: The NFL as a National Attention Economy

The NFL generates substantial direct economic value through franchise revenues, ticket sales, and media contracts. At the team level, the New England Patriots illustrate the scale of this financial output. According to Forbes, the Patriots were valued at approximately \$9 billion in 2025 and generated about \$762 million in annual revenue (Forbes, 2025). The team plays at Gillette Stadium, which has a capacity of 66,878 seats and generates substantial revenue from ticket sales. During the 2026 season, total home attendance reached 581,652 fans, with an average ticket price of approximately \$330. Additional revenue streams such as concessions, merchandise, parking, and sponsorships further increase total income. For example, naming rights agreements alone generate millions annually, with Procter & Gamble paying approximately \$8 million per year for Gillette Stadium (Yahoo Finance, 2025).

However, the largest source of direct economic value comes from media rights. The NFL's 2021-2033 media rights agreement is worth over \$100 billion, distributing massive annual payments across the league's broadcasting partners: approximately \$2.7 billion from ESPN/ABC, \$2.2 billion from FOX, \$2.1 billion from CBS, \$2.0 billion from NBC, and \$1.0 billion from Amazon for exclusive Thursday Night Football rights. Media companies are willing to invest at this scale because NFL broadcasts deliver massive, predictable audiences, something no other programming can match. According to ESPN, the NFL averages 18.7 million viewers per game, making football the most valuable advertising real estate on television (ESPN, 2025). That audience concentration drives advertising prices to extraordinary levels: a single 30 second spot

on NBC's "Sunday Night Football" costs approximately \$1,008,746, while the same slot runs \$637,718 on ABC's "Monday Night Football" and \$562,918 on Prime Video's "Thursday Night Football" (eMarketer, 2025). Beyond advertising, these broadcasts also generate revenue through subscription services across multiple streaming platforms, typically costing consumers \$10-20 per month. The result is a media system where the NFL sits at the center, generating billions not by selling seats in a stadium but by selling access to the attention of millions of viewers simultaneously.

Taken together, these figures demonstrate that the NFL has evolved beyond a traditional sports league into a national-scale attention economy. The shift from ticket revenue to media contracts is not simply a change in revenue source, it fundamentally transforms the NFL's economic model. While Gillette Stadium can hold 66,878 fans per game, a single broadcast reaches 18.7 million viewers simultaneously, meaning the league monetizes attention far beyond the physical constraints of any stadium. This allows the NFL to generate value at a scale that no amount of ticket sales could match. Media companies are willing to pay billions annually because NFL broadcasts deliver massive, reliable audiences that advertisers cannot find elsewhere. The result is an economic engine where live games serve as the core product, but the true value is extracted through the national distribution of that product to millions of consumers across multiple platforms.

The Anchor Effect: How NFL Teams Drive Local and Regional Economies

Beyond direct revenue, the NFL generates significant indirect economic value for the locals through spillover effects that extend into local and national economies. One of the clearest

indicators of this impact is consumer spending associated with game attendance. For instance, David Morehouse, Executive Vice President of Strategy for the Pittsburgh Steelers, reported in an interview that approximately 58% of game attendees travel more than 75 miles, generating an estimated \$61 million in local spending per home game week (Capital Analytics Associates, 2024). This spending flows into hotels, restaurants, transportation, and retail businesses, illustrating how NFL activity stimulates surrounding economies.

Additional evidence supports this multiplier effect. Bank of America data shows that credit and debit card spending increases by approximately 77% in areas surrounding NFL stadiums on game days (Bank of America Institute, 2024). Large-scale events such as the Super Bowl amplify this effect even further, with hotel prices increasing by as much as 257% due to heightened demand (Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals, 2024). These patterns indicate that the NFL drives concentrated bursts of economic activity that extend well beyond stadium operations.

The league also contributes to job creation and long-term economic infrastructure. For example, the Pittsburgh Steelers organization supports approximately 3,000 permanent jobs (Capital Analytics Associates, 2024). In addition, NFL teams maintain extensive corporate partnerships across industries including healthcare, finance, technology, hospitality, and sports betting. The New England Patriots alone maintain partnerships with organizations such as Brigham and Women's Hospital, Bank of America, Dell Technologies, DraftKings, and Fanatics (SportsPro, 2025). These partnerships demonstrate that the NFL functions as a cornerstone within a broader economic network, connecting multiple industries and generating value beyond sports itself.

Prior research has found that professional sports teams produce limited local economic growth (Bradbury et al., 2022). However, these findings suggest that the NFL's impact is more accurately understood through a network-based ecosystem model. Rather than simply creating new economic activity from nothing, the NFL functions as an anchor institution that connects and redistributes spending across multiple sectors. A single home game week can generate \$61 million in local spending, a 77% spike in surrounding card transactions, and hotel price surges of over 250% during major events. Beyond this seasonal spending, teams sustain year round economic infrastructure through thousands of permanent jobs and corporate partnerships that connect otherwise unrelated industries. Industries including healthcare, finance, technology, hospitality, and sports betting all converge around a single franchise. The NFL's indirect economic value cannot be measured by stadium activity alone. It must be understood as the cumulative impact of an organization that ties together entire local and regional economies.

The Platform: How the NFL Powers a Technology Driven Economic Network

A major finding of this research is that the NFL's economic impact is increasingly driven by its integration with technology and media systems. The league's digital presence demonstrates its scale, with over 32 million followers on social media platforms, while individual teams such as the Patriots have 5 million followers as well. This level of engagement transforms fans into active participants in a digital ecosystem that generates value through attention, data, and content consumption.

The NFL's relationship with the video game industry further illustrates this integration. Electronic Arts signed a \$1.5 Billion, 5 year contract with the NFL. In the first 24 hours of

release, 1.4 million copies of Madden 26, an NFL football game created by EA Sports, were sold. This extends the league's influence into gaming, creating additional revenue streams and reinforcing fan engagement outside of live games.

Media production and broadcasting also represent a significant source of employment and economic activity. Each NFL broadcast requires hundreds of production staff, engineers, and analysts (Sports Video Group, 2025), while media organizations such as ESPN produce hundreds of NFL-related articles in a single month. For perspective, ESPN alone published 684 NFL-related articles in August 2025. At a broader level, the global sports streaming market is projected to grow from approximately \$33.9 billion in 2024 to over \$75 billion by 2030, indicating continued expansion driven in part by sports content (Yahoo Finance, 2024).

Additionally, the NFL's physical technological infrastructure has measurable impacts. NFL stadiums consume approximately 10,000-20,000 kWh of electricity per game to power lighting, screens, and broadcast systems during the typical 3-4 hour game time (Integrity Energy, 2024). To put this in perspective, a single NFL game consumes in just three to four hours what an average American household uses over an entire year. General Electric confirmed that upwards of 11 million kilowatt-hours of energy are consumed by viewers to watch the Super Bowl (Opower, n.d.). Many stadiums, such as Gillette Stadium, have adopted renewable energy systems; its 3,000 solar panels generate approximately 1 MW of solar capacity, reflecting a shift toward energy-efficient infrastructure.

These findings suggest that the NFL should not be understood solely as a sports league, but as a media and technology platform. Live games function as the core raw material, and everything built around them – streaming, gaming, social media, and sports gambling – are derivative products that multiply the value of that original content. EA Sports pays \$300 million

per year to build a video game around the NFL brand. ESPN publishes hundreds of NFL articles per month to drive traffic and subscriptions. Online sportsbooks generate billions from NFL game outcomes. Each of these is a separate industry with its own jobs, revenues, and consumer base, yet are significantly amplified by the NFL. What makes this economically significant is that the value created by these derivative industries flows back into the NFL itself. Higher gaming engagement increases brand visibility. More media coverage drives viewership. More viewership drives up advertising prices. More gambling activity deepens fan investment in outcomes, which increases viewership further. This is not a one-directional supply chain, it is an effective economic cycle where each layer of the ecosystem strengthens every other layer. The NFL's digital presence of over 32 million followers gives it the power to activate all of these channels simultaneously, making the league not just a content producer but the central node in a technology-driven economic network. This is why the NFL's economic impact cannot be captured by looking at direct revenue or indirect local revenue alone. The true value lies in the ecosystem it sustains. These interconnected systems suggest that the NFL does not simply monetize fans through a single channel, but increasingly captures value from the same user across multiple layers of engagement. The same network effects that make this ecosystem so economically powerful also create the conditions for extraction. As the platform grows, each new layer, streaming subscriptions, gambling partnerships, premium seating, targeted advertising, represents another mechanism to capture revenue from the same fan. What begins as value creation at scale can, over time, shift toward value extraction at scale. This tension between the NFL's role as an economic engine and its growing capacity to exploit the fans who power it is the central question its continued growth will have to answer.

The Emotional Infrastructure: The Foundation of NFL Economics

In addition to economic value, the NFL generates significant social utility through its role in shaping community identity and collective experiences. While these effects are more difficult to quantify, existing research provides strong evidence that sports contribute to psychological well-being and social cohesion. Wann (2006) demonstrates that identification with a sports team can increase feelings of belonging and life satisfaction, while Schwester (2007) argues that sports infrastructure contributes to civic pride and community identity .

These social effects are reinforced through shared experiences. NFL games function as national and local events that bring together millions of viewers simultaneously, creating a sense of collective participation. This is particularly evident during major events such as the Super Bowl, which serves as both a cultural and social gathering point. These shared experiences strengthen social bonds and contribute to a broader sense of cultural cohesion.

Recent research also suggests that social engagement has direct economic implications. Trkulja et al. (2022) find that team identification increases fan activity on social media, which in turn drives revenue through advertising, streaming, and merchandise sales. This indicates that social identity is not separate from economic value, but instead functions as a driver of engagement that fuels the broader sports economy. The Super Bowl is the clearest example. Super Bowl LX drew 125.6 million viewers (Associated Press, 2026), making it one of the most viewed broadcasts in television history. Millions tune in for the halftime performance, the commercials, and the experience of watching with others. Advertisers pay over a million dollars for a single 30 second spot because the Super Bowl is the only event in American media where people watch the ads intentionally. A football game that draws 125 million viewers, many of

whom do not follow the sport, is evidence that the NFL's social value has transcended the game itself. The league has embedded itself into American cultural life as a shared national experience, and that cultural position is what makes its economic model work.

Overall, these findings reveal that the NFL's social utility is not separate from its economic value, it is the foundation of it. The emotional connections, community identity, and collective experiences that the league generates are precisely what drive fans to watch, subscribe, purchase merchandise, and engage on social media. The NFL's \$100 billion media deal does not exist without millions of people who care enough to tune in every week. The league's ability to create shared meaning and belonging is not a secondary benefit that exists alongside its economic output. It is the emotional infrastructure upon which the entire economic system depends. This connection between identity and revenue is critical to understanding why the league continues to command public investment, cultural attention, and widespread support.

Conclusion

This research set out to determine whether the NFL generates meaningful economic and social value for the United States, and whether that value justifies the legal exceptions and public investment the league receives. Across direct revenue, local spillover effects, technology integration, and social identity, the findings suggest that it does. The NFL operates not simply as a sports league, but as a national economic platform in which live games generate value that multiplies across media, gaming, gambling, and corporate partnerships. These systems are sustained by the emotional connections that drive millions of fans to engage consistently over time.

Given these findings, the NFL's legal protections and public subsidies are broadly justified, but not unconditionally. The Sports Broadcasting Act and antitrust exemptions have enabled the league to construct a highly coordinated economic ecosystem that generates value across multiple sectors of the American economy. However, this same system has created growing tension between profitability and the fan experience, as the mechanisms that drive economic expansion increasingly prioritize revenue extraction over long-term engagement.

The rapid expansion of legalized sports gambling illustrates this tension clearly. Partnerships between leagues and sportsbooks have introduced new revenue streams while simultaneously increasing the risk of addiction and financial harm, particularly among younger audiences. At the same time, broader trends in commercialization, including NIL-driven college athletics and escalating media monetization, are reshaping how fans interact with sports, shifting the experience from participation toward consumption.

But gambling is not the only concern. Across the sports landscape, the fan experience is being squeezed by corporate interests. Stadiums are replacing general seating with premium luxury sections, pricing out the fans who built these teams' cultures. Ticket prices continue to climb. Commercial breaks during broadcasts grow longer every year. Events like the Super Bowl and the College Football Playoff are increasingly filled with corporate guests and sponsors rather than passionate fans who want to root for their team. The result is ordinary viewers and attendees are beginning to feel less like fans and more like products, sources of data, attention, and revenue to be extracted from

This shift is best understood as a transition toward a multi-layered system of fan monetization. Rather than operating as a traditional two-sided market where value is extracted from a user once or twice, the NFL ecosystem monetizes the same fan simultaneously across

multiple interconnected layers. Fans generate direct revenue through ticket purchases, concessions, and merchandise, while their attention is sold through media rights and advertising markets. Fans have to spend more and more on subscriptions to watch games online. Their engagement is further monetized through sports betting platforms, and their behavior is increasingly tracked and leveraged for data-driven targeting and content optimization. Additional layers, such as premium seating and exclusive experiences, further segment and extract value from different tiers of consumers. These mechanisms are not isolated. They reinforce one another within a unified system supported by media, technology, and corporate partnerships. The fan, therefore, becomes the central asset through which value is generated across the entire network.

If this trajectory continues unchecked, the same system that maximizes short-term revenue risks undermining the long-term sustainability of the sports economy. As extraction intensifies across these layers, the fan experience deteriorates, weakening the emotional connection that drives engagement in the first place. This dynamic mirrors patterns seen in digital platforms like Instagram and YouTube, and more recently in the live events industry, where the DOJ's 2024 antitrust suit against Ticketmaster alleged that vertical control over venues, promotion, and ticketing allowed the company to systematically overcharge consumers and suppress competition (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024). This case illustrates how platform-based firms, once they achieve sufficient scale, are able to move beyond value creation and toward extraction, locking users into systems designed to maximize revenue per participant. Over time, declining fan satisfaction may lead to reduced viewership, weaker brand loyalty, and a contraction of the economic ecosystem that currently generates billions in revenue, employment, and technological development. To prevent this outcome, policymakers should introduce stronger safeguards that protect the fan experience while preserving the economic

benefits of the industry. This includes limits on advertising saturation during broadcasts, greater transparency in ticket pricing and stadium access, stricter regulation of sports gambling promotion, and increased investment in consumer protection and addiction prevention.

More broadly, this reflects a structural shift across modern technology-driven and platform-based industries. As firms mature, their focus often moves away from innovation and toward optimizing and monetizing existing users. Rather than expanding value creation, companies increasingly rely on extracting more value from the same users through layered monetization strategies enabled by data, pricing power, and platform control. This pattern is visible in digital media, where engagement is prioritized over content quality, and in housing markets, where platform-driven models extract higher returns from existing supply rather than increasing availability. Technology enables greater efficiency, but that efficiency is increasingly directed toward extraction rather than improvement. Over time, this shift can reduce incentives for innovation and weaken long-term economic efficiency. The NFL represents a highly visible example of this transition, but the underlying mechanism is not unique to sports. It reflects a broader tension within platform economies, where the same systems that generate immense value can, at scale, incentivize behavior that ultimately undermines the users and experiences they depend on.

Looking ahead, the sports industry shows no signs of slowing down. The global sports streaming market is projected to more than double by 2030. Media rights deals continue to break records. New technologies such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality are likely to create entirely new ways for fans to engage with and spend money on sports content. These developments will only deepen the NFL's integration into the American economy and daily life. My research has focused primarily on the positive economic and social contributions of the NFL.

Future research should examine the costs more closely, including the public burden of stadium subsidies and the social effects of gambling expansion. But beyond individual costs, the most urgent question for future work is a structural one: what happens to the NFL's economic engine if fan exploitation continues on its current path? Future research should investigate these long-term effects before the damage becomes irreversible. The NFL generates real and substantial value for the United States, but its long-term sustainability will depend on whether platform-driven growth can be balanced with preserving the fan experience that makes that value possible.

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