Mad About Soccer?
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For the last few years football-broadcasting rights have undermined the economic health of the main pay TV players. Kirch Media's bankruptcy and, more recently, British ITV Digital's show that when it refers to paid content profitability, football is not as successful as it is in other arenas. On the one hand, its audience seem to have found a ceiling of two million subscribers, on the other, pay per view ratios are much lower than expected. While matches between Real Madrid and Barça attract an audience that justifies its astronomic price with succulent advertising income, full championship broadcasting turns out to be, for now, unviable.

In this context, TV networks and clubs are negotiating matches broadcast prices until 2006. However, despite a slight downward correction in tariffs and a certain preference for the "matches of the century", trust in the power of appeal of football remains untouched. And this is not only so in case of television. Internet portal Yahoo! has just sealed an agreement with KirchSport and the FIFA to offer the World Cup highlights.

The explanation for such strength is that soccer satisfies three key conditions for success in the media convergence era we are living in. It's entertainment, it favours interactivity and the creation of communities with a common interest. Its audience ratio success allows it to benefit from synergies by combining different technological platforms (TV, Internet and mobile phone), although, for the time being, the incipient development of new media such as TDT (terrestrial digital TV) or ADSL (broadband Internet) doesn't enable them to reach the general public. With no other content able to mobilize the masses, the bet on football is seen as the sign-up of the season.