New technology is changing the way we view, buy and even participate in sport. A prime example, said Velayutham Chandrasekaran of India's Chennai University, is the modern game of cricket, which is followed by upwards of half a billion people in his nation. In cricket, modern technology has not only led to blanket coverage of matches but it has also had a major impact on the way the game is played.

India's love affair with cricket began in earnest after it won the World Cup in 1983 and so far it has shown little sign of abating. However, recent innovations are having a major effect on the game, not least the way in which decisions are taken on the field of play. And generally, cricket fans are viewing these innovations in a positive light.

The task of cricket's “third umpire” used to be restricted to scrutinizing TV replays. Now, Chandrasekaran pointed out in a Play the Game session on sport and technology, it is aided by devices such as the “snickometer” - a sensitive microphone placed close to the stumps that registers contact between bat and ball. There is also the “Hawkeye”, a device that allows the third umpire to see where the ball would have been heading if it had not been blocked by a batsman's leg, and the “dartfish” which accurately maps and shows the line, length and speed of the ball.

Although these innovations have been welcomed, Chandrasekaran said, their introduction presents certain dilemmas. Can the professional game ever be played without them? And since different varieties are available, won't their quality and accuracy vary? While acknowledging the positive impact these innovations have had on the game, he expressed concern that no definitive standardisation currently exists.

Modern technology has a major impact on the way cricket is played. But Velayutham Chandrasekaran of India’s Chennai University is concerned that no standardisation exists. Photo: Scanpix/AFP

Taking another angle, Claude Sobry of France's Lille University looked at the new media and the scramble for European football broadcast rights. He asked whether the spiralling costs of football rights can continue indefinitely, and pointed out that the advent of new technology such as mobile phones capable of delivering video content can artificially hike the market price. Some telecommunication companies are paying very high sums for mobile rights even though they cannot make a profit, he said. Profits are increasingly being made from periphery activities, not from the sport itself.

Yann Abdourazakou of the University of Lille spoke of the digitalisation of merchandising in football clubs - that is the selling of digital content to fans.

Next generation devices suit some sports more than others, he said, but competitions such as the Americas Cup have succeeded in representing on a mobile phone what fans are unable to access on TV. In the next decade, he said, clubs will concentrate on shifting their current fan base into the virtual marketplace by offering different angles on demand, equipping referees with cameras and introducing other initiatives allowing fans to personalise the content they receive.