

Role of mass media in sports communication

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Abstract

The role of mass media has always been vital in boosting any activity of sport. Media has got focal position particularly in communication of the fresh information, shaping viewpoint of the masses, and bringing live sport and the like other activities to the consumer at his/her convenience. In the present era, close interaction between the media and sport are indispensable. Both feed one another; sport needs publicity and mass approach to majority of the population, which media do, whereas media feeds on the sport news provided by the different activities of sport. Formerly print and electronic media, mainly consisting of newspapers, magazines, TV coverage, were the chief sources of media for the dispersal of information. But with the explosion of the IT technology and with the advent of internet, the horizon of the media has significantly been widened. Examining the available literature, this study is an effort to separately evaluate the impact of different tools employed as a source of interaction of the mass media with various aspects of sport.

Keywords: media, sport consumers, radio, TV, internet

Introduction

Almost everyone is dealing with the phenomenon of sport in today's world. People are either athletes or sport fans, who follow sport news and materials in mass media including radio, TV and newspapers. Therefore, investigating sport and media has been widely developed. Increase in reporting and studying in sport mass media, especially about the audience and content in various sport media, is among such examples. Mass media are a function of increasing interest in sport and this interest increase of the audience develops attention of mass media like newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, recently Internet and their wide sport coverage. Considering effect of sport on different dimensions of personal and social life, importance of its development at national scale and mediator role of media in this regard, it is essential to identify role of media in sports development and prepare appropriate plans for it. Any macro planning for effective use of media functions in sports area requires deep identification of this area and investigation of these functions in different axes of development in sport. Mass media of the country, especially national mass media, need to leave traditional and sectional decision making in this regard and move toward strategic planning in different axes and consider consistent national and organizational goals.

Mass media have an axial and undeniable role in meeting the need for development awareness through transferring information to the audience and exchanging thoughts. This point makes it possible for humans to know their surrounding world and make their important personal and social decisions based on clearer and more updated information so that they could get familiar with their social responsibilities, especially for development. Second main responsibility of mass media is their leadership and guidance role. Mass media could play an effective, instructive and leading role in development, awakening public consciousness and raising public awareness by spreading novel ideas.

1.1 What Does Media Mean?

Mass media simply means the interaction of communication taking place at a wider scale, encircling vast population and wide spread territorial jurisdiction. Basically, media is the disseminating medium of different types of news and information to the public at large through print and electronic sources. "The media has been playing a catalyst role for the identification and the promotion of knowledge, information and understanding in a nation". From the sociological perspectives one can say that media has become part and parcel of the everyday life. In this regard the Henley Centre has reported that "People in the UK spend nine hours a day consuming media in its various forms, with television viewing occupying the equivalent of a day a week"

1.2 What Does Sport Mean?

The term sport stands for "All forms of physical activities which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels" (Council of Europe 2001). It is also defined as the activity which has its own techniques and which is properly planned, supervised, and governed by its own traditions, customs and proper set of rules. The sport of today is nothing less than a field of business and, it also provides very vast arena for safe financial investment.

2. Sports and Radio

Up to the early 20th century, the only way to share the immediate drama of a sports event was either to play or to attend. But then came radio. Live radio reporting gave the impression of being there, of being a witness of something emotional and suspenseful. Announcers learned very quickly to give the impression of dense and dramatic events. Another advantage of the radio was and still is its very fast speed. Results and scores can be diffused instantaneously in a very

flexible programme and the radio medium can reach people at any time anywhere, i.e., in the car, at the Workplace, on the beach, etc. Technically, radio stations and their reporters can very easily be interconnected so that radio listeners can virtually move from one place to another.

Live reporting on the radio increased the number of people who could follow a sports event at the same time. It also brought immense popularity to cricket and hockey in India. Even if it has to compete with television, radio remains an important medium for sports news today both in urban and rural areas. Not all professional contests are televised yet, but radio can provide results from these contests instantaneously. Furthermore radio sets are small and portable and can be used in places where watching TV is impossible. Finally, radio can be used as a supplement to television reporting.

3. Sports and Television

Television has clearly become the leading medium in Sports context. Like the radio, it allows live reporting, but because it transmits not only sound but also live images, the feeling of being there is even stronger for television spectators than for radio listeners. So with television, major sporting contests are no longer available just to spectators witnessing the event in person, but also to many millions more who can view the spectacle in their own homes with the television sets they have. The added value of television is evident: close-ups, replays, slow motion, the different angles from different cameras, and cameras that follow the action. It can be more exciting to be a spectator in front of the television screen than to be a spectator in the stadium, far away from the playing field or the arena floor. And, what is most important, television shows live people, sportsmen and women, usually perfectly built, completely fit, attractive, and highly trained young people. The "communication triad" i.e. sports, media, and advertising - produces a highly marketable service; show business. Due to added values - stemming from dramatization, reporting skills, and broadcasting itself-televised sports reaches more individuals than does on-site sports. "The phenomenon of mass consumerism of televised sport has created a much different feel for sport than in the past."

The beginning of television broadcasting was, as well, already closely related to sports. As a test for the new medium, promoters established a TV programme at the 1936-Olympics in Berlin. The programme could be received within a distance of 10 miles from the sender. But as there were yet no TV sets, the organizers also provided 21 auditoriums with large screens. In Great Britain the BBC started its TV test program at the end of the same year, 1936. In the following year, the BBC produced the first live report on television from a sports event: It transmitted 25 minutes of a tennis match from the men's single in Wimbledon on June 21, 1937. Thereafter, sport-on-television programme picked up in a big throughout the world. Due credit must go to television for saving the Olympic Games from being pushed to the wall. Now the telecasting-rights for the Olympic contests is a business running into billions, benefiting the organizers, the IOC, the sports federations and other stakeholders. Television has also made Soccer World Cup, The European Championship, the Wimbledon, French Open, US Open, Australia Open-Tennis tournaments a bid money-spinning events.

4. Sports and the Internet

Since the mid 1990s, not only television but also the Internet can transmit live pictures of Sports events. However, the memory capacity of personal computers and data transfer rates have set limits to this kind of sports broadcasting so far. Therefore television still remains the most important medium for sports reporting. But the Internet already offers a lot of interesting options for sports fans today.

- Statistics, plans, and background information can be consulted without any problems because of the almost unlimited memory capacity of the World Wide Web. So the new medium may be used as a sports encyclopedia.
- The Internet is a platform on which athletes can present themselves: Almost all sports clubs and successful athletes have their own websites.
- Finally, the Internet is an interactive medium, so sports fans can also act as web publishers. Some of them collect information about their idols and publish it on the web; others use discussion forums; and sometimes fans place their bets at online betting offices.

All in all, it can be said that the Internet has become a popular medium for sports fans, too. The Internet allows a fast worldwide transfer of vital data, so it is well suited to the transmission of short sports news. Portal sites specialized in sports and the official websites maintained by organizers of sports events continuously report the latest news and results. These services are very popular, especially during big sports events. The official websites of the 2000 Summer Olympic games in Sydney, the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, and the 2002 Soccer World Cup in Japan and Korea registered billions of page views Within a few weeks. Independent sports portal sites are also frequently used. But many of the free services can hardly recover their expenses.

5. Things Media do for Sport

The broadcast media have literally paved the future direction and success of college, professional, and Olympic sports the world over. However, the manner in which all forms of the media inform, interpret, create drama, and establish particular ideas about sports and society must be realized and understood in right perspective. For example the media:

- Provide considerable knowledge about sports, and the ways in which the media choose to characterize or emphasize certain aspects of sports contribute to the mind-set of individuals in society.
- Define the important sports as well as the importance of sports.
- Interpret concepts such as the athletic body, femininity, and masculinity.
- Create sports heroes and anti-heroes.

For most people, sports are a form of entertainment and spectacle for the audience and for the purpose of extrinsic reward instead of being an activity characterized by intrinsic reward, enjoyment, fun, and challenge for the participant. The media have promoted sports as a product and the athlete as entertainer. There is no doubt that sports provide much enjoyment for the participants and spectators; however, the value of sports, how that value affects our culture and what role power plays in the representation of sports by the media can neither be underestimated nor overlooked. Perhaps one of

the reasons that sports is such a huge part of our social conscious is the fact that each game is recorded, documented and filed away. The media is not only dictating what events we watch but how we watch them, and more importantly, how we remember them.

6. Sport is a Product

The media is not only ushered an era of consumerism with a big bang but also made the sporting world into a golden goose that never flies anywhere for the winter. A single advertiser pays millions per 30 second spot at the cricket world or India-Pakistan encounter. The reason for this is not difficult to locate. With the hundreds of millions watching worldwide, the reach of sports entertainment has marketing directors across the globe drooling at the exposure that could be given to their product. Now, this is only for 30 seconds - think about the exposure and revenue generated by having your favorite team out there for hours at time. So why do people continue to sit through the countless commercials and shameless product placements. Perhaps it is because there is some consistency in sports that does not exist in our everyday lives. The everlasting memories that can be replayed over and over again are a treasure that cannot be taken away. The media immortalizes Sport and sportspersons. In fact the athlete never truly retires as their greatest moments are always on the air. Just as in any other entertainment, media also creates a sport celebrity.

7. Conclusion

The research results related to content analysis of mass media indicated that, as far as variables of sport components were concerned, the highest emphasis was on professional and championship sports, especially in a limited number of sports. It seems that public-recreational, educational, women, disability, institutional and local sports cover a widespread community; also sport experts believe that some of them like public and educational ones have more important roles in society than championship and professional sports, however, these sports did not receive the required attention in sport mass media while educational sport had the highest level and domain of people participation compared with other components. Sports and the media have both a global and a local scope of operation and are bound together in a complex network of relationship. The power of the small number of major media companies raises important issues of the access and equity, especially with the growth of pay to view sports events. While the media have demonstrated a considerable capacity to influence the character and development of sports.

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