

Sports media coverage

[Sport & Tourism](#)



The relationship between the media coverage and sport exists for a long time. The sports media coverage generates interest and excitement. Without media, sport would not be able to attract so much promotion and advertising sponsorship. However, today viewers are seeing a massive readjustment in sports media coverage that has historically been a productive relationship between the sports games and the media. In this transformation, media channels are turned into multibillion-dollar businesses.

An indicator of the changing sports-media relationship is the growing amount of fan-driven content in sports coverage. Just as modern political media coverage has turned general political events into the stuff of spectacle, so modern sports media coverage has turned sport into show business. As a result, modern sports media focuses too much on flashy headlines and causes controversy. The media presents sport with drama, conflict and entertainment and does not focus on the spirit of the games. Today, the sports media coverage has become humorous, entertaining and slick.

Now, with the 24-hour sports channels nationally (for example ESPN) instead of focusing on sporting events, the viewer can watch literally dozens of sports headlines that are repetitive and does not focus on the spirit of the games. Media and Sports Television programs have fundamentally altered sports. Modern television does not present its spectators with a sports event but with a sports event that is interpreted by television. Reporting rumors as facts, media coverage changes the audience experience that leads to socialization effects.

For example, ESPN network with its programs, such as “ Pardon the Interruption” and “ Around the Horn” presents sport as a unique combination of redundancy and drama which, as a philosopher of sport notes, “ provides for increased satisfactions and wonder as the participation [and, we might add, observation] is repeated. ” Writes another researcher: “ In some ways like dramatic art, sports convey certain ideal possibilities of social life. ” (Harris 244) The ESPN network broadcasts sports full-time on cable and is a powerhouse.

ESPN created the connection between sports and entertainment and idolized its celebrities, values, and dramas, so as to become networked into a sports/entertainment/consumer society (Harris 245). ESPN should create sports coverage that supplements the goals and missions of the games in vibrant and meaningful ways. The essence of the games is pure - the virtues of competitive sports are positive and worthwhile. People continue to love sports. They love to learn about them daily. Therefore, sports coverage must be beautiful to watch.

Unfortunately, the money, the hype, the business contracts, the soap opera, off-the field lives of sports superstars all tend to obfuscate the virtues of the games. The dramas have become sport itself. One of the most important issues regarding ESPN network concerns the quality of their viewers' experience. Shows like “ Pardon the Interruption” and “ Around the Horn” altered the relationship between fan and athlete, causing irretrievable damage to the traditional viewer experience. Further, as the teams with television contracts became more professionalized and commercialized, amateur games began to decline.

<https://assignbuster.com/sports-media-coverage/>

Modern sports media coverage has several consequences: it creates a peculiar relationship between viewer and athlete; it generates symbolic societal values and norms; and - perhaps most important - it does not focus on the wealth of the games. In addition, it is now generally recognized that mediated sports became a highly profitable commodity. Some researchers indicate that this media involvement has resulted in the increased commoditization of sports that has ruined sports for the fans (Simons 296).

Considering the media-sports linkage from the other end, it is clear that commercial sports had greater influence over the media coverage than did noncommercial sports because sports journalists, under the pressure of deadlines, focus only on the controversies in sports. But if TV journalists serve commercial television, then print journalists serve commercial publication, aiming to build circulation. Thus, journalists can not provide good journalism that will be good for the sports.

As a result, people have no reliable way of finding out what's going on in sports world. But at the same time news professionals are wage earners or hourly employees whose livelihood and social position depend on an employer's sufferance and financial continuance, which, in turn, are dependent on the sale of advertising space sufficient to assure at least minimum profitability for the media corporation (Simons 296). As a product of the business sports media coverage is no longer about "higher purposes" of the games.

News channels that are dominated by flashy headlines and sports coverage have come to appreciate form over substance in organized athletics. The

values of an entertainment TV culture have supplanted in importance the game itself. News channels promote the belief that it isn't really sports unless it includes a drama. It is the belief that an athlete isn't important unless it is worthy of an ESPN highlight. People are becoming blinded by the hype. Also sports media coverage creates images of race and gender in society (Washington and Karen 200).

While there are some famous examples of positive racial images, for instance Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods, the media coverage has often used its huge power to portray black athletes as poster boys for various social transgressions and taboos (Washington and Karen 146). An example of this is found in a Sports Illustrated article on out-of-wedlock fathers that highlighted mostly black NBA players (Harris 145). Black stars' rise to fame and their controversial careers are accompanied by acclaim.

Many studies have also reported misrepresentations of gender in coverage of women's sports with stories about non-athletic episodes of the women's lives (Washington and Karen 236). The more a person is in the headlines, the more their lives are covered by layers of gossip and mythologizing. The ESPN network cares more about controversy and flashy headlines in order to get popularity. Certainly, the data on Tony Romo and Jessica Simpson relationship, and their trip to Cabo or the injuries and deaths of sportsmen should be sufficient to gain public attention.

It is therefore no surprise that ESPN network might find a "hook" like drama in an effort to receive some public attention. The selecting and reporting of "news" by the ESPN network is shaped by one force - cultural. Considering

culture, news that conforms to cultural myths or stereotypes will be more willingly accepted by viewers than “ news” that contradicts common beliefs and observations. Culture Sports headlines tell their own story: the top of the world, the fights, the money, the women, all the triumphs, all the tragedies.

If stars are the central figures of sport representation, it is only through transforming their lives into the form of dramas that they come to signify.

The ESPN network made the image of sport star as a part of the domain of the mythic word. ESPN clearly contributes to the domain of the mythic.

Sports is mediated through media representation, and it is in the media that is the crucial interface between the sporting event and audience. Sport has its distinct spaces - the sports pages, sports news on television and radio.

Sports headlines still have other character - to consume it is to move into another parallel universe with its different values. Indeed, this is part of media - it is a time out of ordinary life - a gateway to the mythic. ESPN network uses stories gossips, rumors and scandals as the facts by which a society creates meaning of sports events. Stories have characters and a set of codes for setting in place the deeds of leading characters. The media, in order to make events meaningful, turn them into narratives.

This process is particularly striking in the coverage of the events of sport.

Sport coverage is dominated by stars, who, as the bearers of this process of stories telling, play a central role in the strategies used by media organisation ESPN to win and hold its audiences. The work the modern media performs on sport in turning it into representational form that does not have the spirit of the games. • All these folk tales might include: • the emergence

of a striking talent • the accomplishing of extraordinary feats public celebration • secondary circulation of star image • public scandal • failure • the hero redeemed by extraordinary performance These and other stories have a tendency to repeat in the form of a loop. These stories rapidly become pegs on which to hang other stories. Through the media, sportsmen are turned into familiar figures, household names, but also into heroes, mythologized icons, producing a strong public desire to know the 'real' person. Journalists help them be 'known' through media representation.

Flashy headlines present the 'ups-and-downs' of the stars describing those who didn't quite achieve the heights, and those who did but who are also the subject of scandals, or in those whose 'genius' is balanced against their 'indiscipline'. The need to keep sport stars in the public eye, to sustain their marketability, is often a factor of various failings to focus on the spirit of the games (Maguire 88). Sports Media and Promotional Techniques The ESPN network uses certain promotion techniques. Headlines tactics are the foundation of the promotion field and consist of two main types.

First, sports headlines releases are used to discuss everything from celebrity marriages to drug and alcohol treatment. Second, feature sports headlines supply details about prominent and aspiring sports stars. Stars often make the talk-show circuit as a way of self-promotion. The television viewers who watch entertainment news programs find such stories extremely interesting, and, of course, the ESPN fill airtime with this stuff. A related aspect of the economy of contemporary professional sports involves the marketing of stars.

This is not a new phenomenon in show business, as we have observed, but it takes on new dimensions in the television programs. Television programs have made sports stars more recognizable, and added to the overall presence of sport in contemporary popular culture. The National Basketball Association has taken particular advantage of television since the 1980s to associate the game with the skills and personalities of a series of stars: Magic Johnson and Larry Bird, Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley, Shaquille O'Neal and Grant Hill.

Televised basketball's "visible heads" mean that viewers get vivid individual images, both of the extravagant skills of a Jordan, and the emotions and "attitude" out of which imaged personae have been constructed around men like Barkley and Rodman (Kahle and Riley, 69). The NBA has built on these advantages with spectacular success, as have the shoe companies Nike and Reebok. The effect has been to create an unprecedented series of black American celebrities. Celebrity has in turn augmented the visibility of the league and the game in American (and now global) popular culture.

What this illustrates is that "the aims and results of star-making are part and parcel of the brand-imaging of the cultural products, and companies, with which stars are creatively associated." (Wernick, 1991, p. 107) An important aspect in the commoditization of American sport will involve tracing the relationships that developed between professional sports and the sports media, and the role of the sports media in building audiences for "major league" sport. It is not only that the sports media gave free publicity to the professional leagues simply by reporting their games as news.

Equally important was that the popularity of sports coverage demonstrated the possibility of sport to attract large and predictable audiences for advertisers. The relationships between professional sports and the media have changed the media business. Drugs Drug use by athletes is widely represented in sports media. The widespread availability of performance-enhancing substances combined with athletes willing to do anything to improve their performances is a hot topic in coverage of performance-enhancing drug.

Sports coverage is focusing on performance-enhancing drug as primarily a problem for sport and blames individual athletes for creating the problem. Governing bodies of sport are like reformers seeking to “clean up” sports by controlling the behavior of a few rogue athletes. Interpretation by the Sports Media Although sports media claims to present athletic events objectively, they engage in considerable interpretation in the production phase before their programs reach an audience. Many athletic events are recreated in order to attract an audience and entertain spectators. Simons 296) This has important implications for the form of sports coverage. One of the most important techniques is story-telling, or narrative. For example, the ESPN programs always use narratives to dramatize things. Television sports coverage exhibits many of the melodramatic elements that characterize soap operas, and thus have been dubbed the “male soap opera” (Washington and Karen 146). Stereotyped characters and storylines, creation and resolution of drama and exploration of particular themes are all the components of narrative that are often present in sports media coverage.

Kahle and Riley (2004) used a narrative framework to show how the media shaped the drama that developed around the trading of superstar NFL quarterback Joe Montana from the San Francisco 49ers to the Kansas City Chiefs. When issues such as lives of sportsmen are interpreted in sports media, they tend to be seriously distorted. Sports media coverage became anything but not standardized. It has grown up in sports news and reports with unreliable information presented. The lack of standardization in sports media coverage fosters a vibrant field of stories and exciting images, but this context also disempowers many Olympic athletes.

John Merrill calls journalistic ethics a “swampland of philosophic speculation where eerie mists of judgment hang low over a boggy terrain” (Kahle and Riley 63). While ethical standards are the standard of professions such as medicine and law, they have become thorny issues among the sports media because many feel codes contradict the “rights” of the free media. Sports media usually refuse to discuss the topic of media ethics that leaves viewers and readers confused about the roles and standards of the wide range of information presented.

Entertainments come into contact with international sporting events. Thus, the sports media has significantly influenced both athletes and sporting events by mixing information for prestige during event coverage. The survey of world class Yugoslavian athletes found some athletes were affected by the sports media's pursuit of sensational stories (Harri236). Sensationalism was found to exaggerate scandals out of proportion, to unduly increase performance pressure for 15 percent of world class athletes, and to foster an unfavorable team climate between athletes (Harris 240).

<https://assignbuster.com/sports-media-coverage/>

This resulted in some coaches banning athletes from being interviewed by the sports media during training. A significant number of world class athletes (35 percent) were, however, motivated to excel by statistical coverage of sporting events found in the media. The researchers came to conclusion that the demanding work of sports journalism requires both journalistic skill, knowledge of the sport being interpreted, and a respect for athletes who “co-produce” knowledge for the media (Harris 251).