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A cardinal approach towards sports news in national newspaper through journalism and mass media

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Abstract

A paradox exists at the heart of sports journalism. On one hand, it has over the years often been viewed as the poor relation within journalism, lacking the integrity that journalists often like to associate with their self-image. Sports journalism has been characterised as a form of “soft” journalistic practice, without the rigour and credibility of other forms of “hard” journalism. It was an area of journalism that was viewed as an uncritical booster and promoter of sport and its culture rather than a sector that called the powerful in sport to account. It was a journalism that was more often going to ask the easy and banal question, rather than the penetrating and pertinent one.

The digital turn of the has also dramatically reshaped the journalistic landscape, with sports journalism often being at the leading edge of this transition as journalism moved online and many new (often fan-based) sources of information become available around sports culture. The business crisis in print journalism has arrived at the sports journalists door somewhat later than for other sectors, but arrive it has. As the funding of journalism moves centre stage as a driver in shaping the new trajectories of journalism, those working in sports also have had to adapt and re-invent themselves and it is this process that is the focus of this special issue of Digital Journalism.

Keywords: Sports news, national newspaper, journalism, mass media

Introduction

Running through this collection are a number of themes related to sports journalism in the digital environment. These include aspects of disruption to: established norms of journalistic practice, institutional allegiance, the authority and primary definer role of journalism, and the career structure and development for journalists writing about sport. These articles draw on empirically led research that mixes qualitative and quantitative approaches and seek to better understand and position what is going on across contemporary sports journalism. In so doing, this collection identifies change, but also areas of continuity as well as new opportunities for journalists.

This contribution, and that of Sherwood *et al.*'s investigation, highlight the growing complexity that exists between sport and journalism as the media become more embedded in the financial structure of elite sport at a time of technological change. The position of public relations and the importance of sustained institutional support for journalistic output are all highlighted as the front line of sports journalism is examined. The media conditions society's vision and understanding of sport. In a certain way, the media provides a narrative that exerts a didactic influence on the concept of sport and physical education. Themes of technological disruption as well as new opportunities are examined in research tackles debates around the growing impact of data on journalistic practice. Through various types of media, a high level of interest of spectators in sport in general is generated and research makes it possible to identify the conditions in which the modern culture and communication industry develops. The contemporary digital culture presents a complex network of “hyper mediations. In addition, the didactic potential and influence of the content of sports information is relatively unexplored territory.

The rise of different social sport networks in current society enables journalists from different media groups to publish information assiduously. In this way, they can directly contact consumers and exert a greater influence. Despite being an attractive medium of information, used by journalists to express, disseminate and contrast their own opinion with

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those from other perspectives, reporters are limited in the content they can diffuse.

The availability of different means of communication has the advantage of allowing various channels to be used simultaneously to share information. An important aspect of the digital culture is that it attracts an extreme level of interest in media content which generates undoubted influence on a large number of different areas, this is known as the “hostile media effect”. This has been previously examined with regards to the influence of viewing television media by examining specifically the gaze of children. The contemporary approach to this line of work instead seeks to examine strategies for media and digital literacy. The importance of this is demonstrated when the radical increase of journalists in the field of sports information is considered, with journalists now seeking to acquire greater personal prominence through live broadcasting, through which many sports are now reproduced daily on television sets.

Methodology

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement for systematic reviews was used to structure the present review and increase its integrity. Studies were classified and coded by the authors through independent evaluation. Studies were deleted when independent codings failed to coincide on a single occasion. Reliability of the coding was checked by dividing the total number of matches by the total number of categories proposed for the study and multiplying this outcome by 100. Degree of agreement was required to exceed 80% for a study to be included. In order to specify the theme of the work, the research domains “Sport Sciences”, “Communication” and “Psychology” were targeted, with other less relevant areas to the study objective being disregarded. After refining the literature search, the final study sample was selected according to the following inclusion criteria: (i) studies in which at least one means of communication was used to spread information; (ii) designed to address the types of influences exerted by the media; (iii) included media designed to address the public; and (iv) used a cross-sectional or experimental research design.

Conclusion

The aim and scope of the present systematic review was to better understand the evolution experienced by the sports media in the last decade, in addition to the influences that these media exert on society and the way in which sport is perceived.

With regards to the extraction and codification of data, the following details were recorded: (1) authors and year of publication; (2) population; (3) type of sport analyzed; (4) media used; (5) instruments used to measure the influence exerted, and (6) type of research developed. The types of influence are differentiated according to the categories health, emotional, physical and violence. Health influences are understood as those that contribute to the development of active lifestyles and well-being. Emotional influences describe responses that arouse nationalistic feelings and the sensation of belonging to a group. Physical influences are those that impact upon body image. Finally, influences relating to violence describe the development of disruptive attitudes and consumption effects, such as those that incite society to acquire products such as trainers. It is

recommended that future research include a more exhaustive analysis of the influence of sports media on the health of spectators. This should include an examination of how the media contribute to changes in lifestyles and how they facilitate the acquisition of these habits, in addition to examining the connection between sports information and a communicative education. This is highly relevant given that mass media are consumed from very early ages and have yet to be comprehensively explored.

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