

## Mass Media and Promotion of Sport (Historical Perspectives)

Mohibullah Khan Marwat<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Waseem<sup>2</sup>,  
Hazratullah Khattak<sup>3</sup>, Asif Abbas<sup>4</sup>, Iffat Bi Bi<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Director Sports, Directorate of Sports, Gomal University, D.I. Khan,

<sup>2,4</sup> Department of Sports Sciences & Physical Education, Gomal University D. I. Khan,

<sup>3,5</sup> Department of Sports Sciences & Physical Education, Sarhad University of Science & Information Technology Peshawar, PAKISTAN.

<sup>1</sup> dsmarwat@yahoo.com, <sup>2</sup> khansspe@gmail.com,

<sup>3</sup> hazratullah.ss@suit.edu.pk, <sup>5</sup> iffat.ss@suit.edu.pk

### ABSTRACT

*Mass media and sport have long been associated. 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, newspaper, radio, TV, Internet

### INTRODUCTION

It has been common understanding about the relationship of the media and sport that these two are so intermingled to each other that none of them can survive independently without the help of the other. Media and sport are closely associated two different institutions of the society. Generally, sport is the field of live action and entertainment whereas media is the medium that provides path to that live action to reach to the masses of the near and remote areas. In this paper, historical relationship of the media with the sport has been presented in a chronological order.

#### 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”* (Alimi, 2003). 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”* (Financial Mail on Sunday, 31 Jan. 1999: 38). According to Hamidi and Choobine (2000), sitting in front of TV is the most common activity of the people’s free time.

## 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.

## MASS MEDIA AND SPORT

Mass media is the new phenomenon of the present era. Mass media generally includes print and different electronic mediums. Print medium is comparatively slow in dispersal of the news and information about certain activity. In this regard, radio, TV, Internet etc. have got an edge upon the print media on account of fast pace of dispersal of the news. Owing to a few distinctions e.g. fast pace of dispersal and abundance of the information and capability of prompt interaction with the consumers, social media is regarded as the most efficient media source (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). These are the mediums which have the capacity to inform the listeners and viewers rightly at the moment of the happening of the action in the field.

Maintenance and upkeep of the sound mutual relationship between media and sport is inevitable particularly for the purposeful existence of the sport. Acosta (2002) pointed out that competitive sports would only survive and develop with the cooperation of the media. To get wide spread popularity and to make respectable space in most of the playing arenas, sport needs to have the support of media. All sporting events either played indoors or outdoors, major or minor, have been struggling hard to attract media’s attention to get prompt exposure and resultantly more financial benefits. On account of media coverage, many players showing outstanding performance have become sport stars of their respective event. Now one can online watch and enjoy the sport event of his/her choice without any difficulty regardless of the fact that wherever it is conducted, either it is in the space, on the mountains, in the plains or it is on the surface of water. At present, it has been an everyday experience that a number of Radio and TV channels remain round the clock busy in the coverage of sport activities and disseminating information about sport throughout the world.

Each and every media outlet has its own style, approach and technique in connection with interaction with the masses. This trend varies from one media source to another depending upon the use of technology. That medium is generally considered to be successful and effective which reaches to the maximum people in a minimum time and for the attainment of this very objective all media sources have been struggling their level best to dominate in performance. In this regard Erik Qualman, the author of the Socialnomics reports that, to reach 50 million people, Radio took 38 years, TV took 13 years, Internet took four years, Ipod took three years but, the most recently introduced Facebook took only nine months to reach the double population of 100 million people. Let us have a look at the relationship of sport and the print media.

## Print Media and Sport

The origin of the newspaper is traced back to the seventeenth century, when the pioneer papers were published. These papers were commonly focusing upon political, social, administrative, commercial and trade related issues. There was no space for sport coverage in the early papers. Since their origin, it took more than a century to allocate some space for the

sport news in its daily editions. It was 1817 when an English newspaper *Morning Herald* introduced the “Sport Section” for the first time. Similarly, the pioneer sport magazines were also published in England, *Sporting Magazine* in 1792 and *Sporting Life* in 1821. Coverage of these both magazines mainly focused upon the activity of horse-racing.

In 1883, the *New York World* became the pioneer newspaper for establishing specialized Sports Newsroom and adding new facilities to its existing infrastructure. Press is the pioneer source that has been serving the role of conveying information to the masses about different aspects of daily life including different activities of sport. In view of the fact that people interested in sport always like to know about the history, the in-progress sport activities and the planned schedule of the activities. Newspapers have always been second to none in this regard. Up to the near past, press had been the sole source of delivering information about the past performance, in-progress and the schedule of the sport activities. “*News of coming events built audiences for sporting contests and, together with the results of past events, helped to sell newspapers*” (Lever & Wheeler, 1993, p. 130).

Since the stepping in of the TV, most sources of the print media have been focusing upon professionally serving the need and interest of the target population. That is why they have still been successful in surviving and in having very wide scope in the present competitive scenario. Considerable increase in the volume of circulation of the different newspapers and enlargement in the sport fictions in the daily and weekly issues is a testimony to the fact that print media is still having the potential to compete and work on the professional grounds. At present, more than sixty thousand newspapers are published in the form of Daily, Weekly, Fortnightly and Monthly bases, having in excess of sixty five million circulations throughout the world. Accordingly, allocated space for sport news has also been enhanced. In conformity with the need of the hour, the size of the sport section in daily newspapers has increased (Wernecken, 2000, pp. 54-55).

### **Electronic Media**

In the next stage, electronic media was introduced into the field of sport. Since its inception, electronic media has been flourishing day by day. Technically, this source of media was more advance as compared to the print media. It includes radio, TV, Internet, Face Book and so on.

### **Radio and Sport**

Invention of radio took place in 1895 by an Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi. With the passage of time, radio remained the only effective source of instant communication of the latest information of the proceedings of the live sport events for so many years. Prior to the invention and its introduction in the field of sport, there was no other immediate source to convey the latest position of the happenings of the sport activity. During the pre-radio age with reference to sport, for having the on spot information, every individual had two options, either to be the competitor or to be the spectator. For becoming a competitor and to be a part of the team requires high standard of performance which was impossible for the common masses. And for becoming a spectator, it too was financially not feasible and rather impossible for everyone to be one of the audience, witness and enjoy the activity of his/her choice being held at a distant place. This exercise prevailed for quite long period. Eventually Radio bridged this gulf of communication between the activity and its consumers.

Invention of the radio introduced some significant and revolutionary changes in the world of sport. Fast pace of communication and attractive nature of the radio coverage distinguished it from the then available sources of communication. Live reporting about the activity and simultaneous transmission of the information to the listener has always been the prime distinction of radio coverage. Secondly, reception of radio’s broadcast has always been much

easier, feasible and affordable for the consumers. One can easily listen to the radio's live broadcast anywhere and at any time as it does not need any costly instrument or availability of the power supply or some special environment etc. Radio coverage keeps the listener onboard and the listener presumes as s/he is personally watching the activity lively. Live and free broadcasting of the news and other information to the masses has been another plus point of the radio transmission.

With the passage of time, radio registered a new history in sport journalism by broadcasting live proceedings of a sport event fulfilling one of the earnest desires of the masses. It happened on 11th April, 1921, when in USA, the KDKA radio station made ever first live broadcast of the Boxing competition between Johnny Ray and Johnny Dundee from Pittsburg Motor Square Garden "KDKA Firsts". KDKA. 2010. (Retrieved 8 November 2010). In the early days of radio transmission, it got very rapid popularity amongst the masses particularly in the USA. According to a careful estimate, in 1927, more than 40 million people listened to the live radio broadcast of the Boxing fight between Dempsey and Sharkey.

On one side, radio was replacing the old and traditional mediums of communication and on the other; it was confronted with strong opposition from the authorities of the print media and sport. In England, it resulted in imposing restriction upon the broadcast of the sport news. Ban was imposed upon British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in connection with broadcasting the sport news before 7'o clock in the evening and this restriction remained intact till 1926 (Llinés & Moreno, 1999, p. 22). But this opposition was nothing more than a misconception it proved to be incorrect after the world heavy-weight boxing fight between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling in 1935. This fight was live broadcast from the radio even then more than 88000 paid audience witnessed this fight in the stadium (Cashmore, 2000, p. 277). On the contrary, radio was serving its role in popularizing the sport and maximizing the volume of the sport lovers.

Despite resistance and opposition from different angles, radio kept on its journey in a progressive fashion and new avenues proved to be new opportunities that paved its way towards domination in the field of communication. Introduction of the radio coverage during the Olympic Games was another landmark in the history of mass media by broadcasting only the inaugural ceremony of the 1928 Winter Olympic Games held at St. Moritz (Heins, 1979). But later on radio was set aside and kept deprived of the coverage of the results of the Summer Olympic Games 1936 Amsterdam (Holland) on account of strong opposition of the print media. "*So significant was the print media to the promotion of the festivals that the executive committee for the Amsterdam Olympics preserved the exclusive domain of the world press by not allowing the results of contests to be radio broadcas*"( Morrow '92, p. 125).

### **Television and Sport**

Invention of the television has been regarded as the result of extensive experiments of different scientists. The first landmark in this context was the successful transmission of an image in 1884 by German inventor Paul Nipkow. Its principal distinction has always been that, in addition to the sound, its ability to communicate live images, and real action to the distant viewers. During the early days of television, like radio, some sport organizers showed their resentment about the television coverage with references to the possible decreasing volume of paid audience of the sport competition. But contrary to this notion, TV played significant role in popularizing sport activities among the masses. And with the passage of time, TV coverage became part and parcel of the sport activities at local, national and international level competition. In the beginning, TV transmission was black-and-white,

technology was not so developed as at present, range of the cameras was very limited and there was no concept of the slow-motion and action-re-play in the sport events. Similarly, proficiency of the technical staff was also not as professional as it is at present. Coverage of the wide area of play like Foot Ball, Hockey or Cricket was nothing less than a challenge for the camera staff. In those days, Boxing was considered to be the most suitable sport event for the TV coverage on account of small and limited dimension of the playing ring (Cashmore, 2000). Range of the TV camera coverage was confined to a very limited area during those early days.

Live TV coverage of the Olympic level competition was made for the first time on 1st August, 1936 during Summer Olympics in Berlin “1936 German Olympics” [Television History, 2010](#). (Retrieved 17 May 2010). Similarly, in the 1950s, coloured TV transmission brought about a revolutionary change in the history of television transmission. Coloured TV transmission became very much popular particularly among the sport lovers. Expansion in the range of effective reception of the TV transmission was another issue of that time. During early 1960s, the introduction of the satellite technology and expansion of the TV coverage proved to be another landmark in the history of media and sport. In 1957 Russia became the first nation to launch first artificial satellite in the orbit followed by USA in the following year making a successful launch of the satellite “Score” in 1958. According to an estimate, there are more than two thousand satellites of different countries. These satellites serve different purposes like sport, entertainment, defense, research, whether forecasting, etc. In fact, the introduction of the satellite transmission in the field of TV coverage, made the world as the global village and resultantly, world-wide TV transmission of sport event has become the routine activity.

### **Internet and Sport**

Technological innovation in the field of media with reference to coverage of sport has got significant contribution in improving the volume of sport loving people and popularizing the sport among the masses. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed introduction of the internet as the latest medium in the field of sport. It has been a matter of common observation that all the conventional media sources including radio and TV have largely been relying upon internet and they have started utilizing it for the dispersal of the news and information. Internet is the fastest spreading technology of the present era. Majority of the people using either source of the media, have now been switched over to the single medium of internet. It carries all the characteristics of an efficient, reliable and competent source of media. Like television, internet also has the capacity to transmit motion picture related to different fields of life including sport. The community of internet viewers is very vast and according to a careful estimate, there are billions of viewers of internet throughout the world. *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* (Settele, 2002).

It has been one of the prime distinction of the internet broadcast that its global coverage is not confined to a specific area or location of the planet earth but with the help of input devices one can listen and watch the activity of his/her choice worldwide. World Wide Web (www) is the most attractive information outlet for those seeking information regarding different aspect of everyday life. Numerous websites have been operational in dispersal of the latest information comprising of news, views and motion pictures of sport activities.

## **DISCUSSION**

Historical facts reveal that professional rivalries among the different mediums of communication have always impeded the way of one another in terms of capturing the market of communication and attracting masses on a large scale. In fact the role of media is that of the mediator between the sport activity and its consumer. Media brings the sport activity and the sport viewer in front of one another regardless of the fact that activity is being held in one corner and its consumer is in the other corner of the world. It has been one of the prime responsibilities of media to serve the universal need of entertainment of the masses. It is a difficult task but with the help of space technology, media has been doing this vital assignment most promptly and elegantly. In the relationship between media and sport, media has got the upper hand. The studies conducted by Home (2005); Kane and Buysse (2005) and Lee (2005) have confirmed the impact of mass media upon sport.

In the field of sport, competitions are conducted in different parts of the world. It has always been the innate desire of the sport loving people to be among viewers of the live activity or, at least to be timely informed about the progress and result of the activity. This natural desire of the masses is served through the online coverage of the activity. A cricket match, for example, might be played in the “Ashes” series in Australia but on the other hand a final match of the “British Open” Squash might be in progress in London. In this case, media justifies its vitality by lively taking both the events of one’s choice from two different poles of the globe to the room of the person who simultaneously love both the events.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Since the inception of the media concept, print media has been regarded as the pioneer source of communication. Despite the present technological advancement in the means of communication, the role, status, and vitality of print media still stands like a hill. Increase in the number and circulation of the newspaper is a testimony to the fact that print media has the capacity to compete and survive in the prevailing era of global technological competition.

Initially, on account of speedy mode of communication, radio got very rapid popularity. Resultantly radio gave very tough time to the print media, but time has proved that if worked professionally, challenges and difficulties could be overcome successfully. With the same professional approach, print media faced the challenges and remained successful in making way-out from the crucial and critical situation. During the first half of the twentieth century, both print media and radio were the two common sources used for the dispersal of information. Both mediums played significant role in popularizing different games among the masses.

In the next episode, TV was introduced which was technologically more advance as, in addition to immediate dispersal of information, it also telecast live motion picture of the activity. One can see the real action on the TV screen rather than to go to the venue of the action. On account of prompt TV coverage, sport has become the field of investment, it is more competitive, more commercial and more business oriented. Sport news has become the integral part of the news channels. A player showing outstanding performance, become the hero and star. His/her actions are closely watched and recorded by the media and presented to the audience as a role model. In many cases, countries are known with the reference of sport stars on account of sport performance. TV has got pivotal role in the whole story of fame and popularity of sport.

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