

## THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATIONS IN SPORTS

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**Abstract:** Communication today is becoming a key precondition for success in sports. This conditionality refers mainly to relations with the media as a key factor for development of sport, sport-clubs, but also a key component for the development of modern athletes on an individual level. The promotion of the effective communication-sports relationship and good practices in this field should emphasize the positive and minimize the negative effects of this relationship in practice.

In democratic societies, the mass media, as mediators between the government and the public, should inform the public about all relevant topics of public interest to the community, including sports, so that individuals can properly form the public opinion and participate in the matters of public interest and concern.

In this paper, sport is considered as a social phenomenon where all social formations or systems directly affect its development, and thus its position in society. The abundance of sports information nowadays does not lag behind information from the field of politics, economics, or any other field. The interest in considering the communication-sport relationship stems from the fact that no significant sporting event can happen and not be offered as information to the mass audience.

**Keywords:** communication, sport, communication-sport relationship, mass media

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The beginnings of the mutual media and sports interaction have a long history. Jay Coakley (2001) points out that the existence and success of commercial sports and sports organizations today largely depends on the media.

Many ask the question, why is the sport so popular today and what makes it attractive to the mass audience. Unlike other events (economic, cultural, political, etc.), sports events are distinguished by immediacy and simplicity, as well as by connection with the immediate experience of the individual, even when it is experienced through the media. One gets the impression that sports events in themselves are evident, present and understandable, and the audience experience them immediately.

It is evident that the media significantly contribute to the great popularity and social importance of sports, but it is safe to say that sports also greatly contribute to increasing the social importance of the media, because with the increase in the number of consumers of sports, the media increasingly expand their market. Hence, it can be concluded that the sport needs the media, not only for its self-promotion, but also because it is easier to attract sponsors, and the media needs the sport because of the attractive contents, which increase the number of their audience.

The relationship between communication and sport is one that is rapidly changing. New technologies, changing organizational structures, a pervasive sports media that now includes a multitude of social media formats, and the explosion of fantasy sports are just some of the ways that sport has been dramatically altered in recent years (Billings, 2018).

### 2. THE CONCEPT OF SPORT

From the history of sports, it is evident that people throughout history have organized various types of sports events. However, it was only in the 19th and 20th century that sport began to develop intensively and ceased to be a privilege of the few (Sentđerđi, 2009). Sport as a social phenomenon on a global scale is experiencing its own expansion in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

The problem of academically researching sport and sports practice has been neglected in scientific circles for a long time. Due to ambiguity in the criteria for defining sport, it was equated with a joke, a type of game, entertainment, a culture of the intensity of muscle effort, a type of educational or competitive activity. This opinion persisted until the concept of sport as an institutional form of physical activity raised, with the emergence of industrial-urban civilization (Kostić, 2014).

In an attempt to define sport as a mass phenomenon, Ljubiša Lazarević (2011) says that: Sport is an area that allows individuals to activate their physical potential, their own socially useful values, with the aim of satisfying higher needs, and this means activating and expanding general and specific capacities inherent in them.

Sport is community - From pick-up soccer games at community fields to the grand stage of the Olympics, sport is rooted in its community. Sport connects people in countless ways, and in sport, communication norms are just incredibly different from virtually any other type or topic of communication (Coombs, 2022).

Sport is primarily a social phenomenon, so all social formations or systems directly affect its development, and thus its position in society. Society is closely related to all forms of manifestation of sports, it ensures the division of roles, including that of sports, provides opportunities for interaction between people, provides knowledge and value orientations in the area of sports, which is an important agent of socialization. Different societies create a system of values in their own way, which directly affects the place and status of sports in those societies.

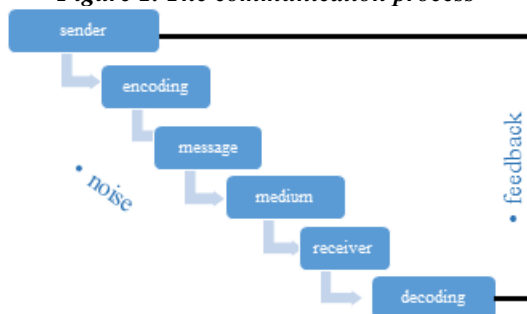
In recent times, the sports industry has had an impact on many segments, both on a macro and micro level. In rich and developing countries, investments in sports are increasing. Thus, spending on sports and recreation, for example, in the United States, has more than doubled over the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bakač, 2020).

### 3. COMMUNICATION AS A SOCIAL SKILL

Although communication as a social skill is taken for granted by many people, effective communication should be understood as occurring when the intended meaning of the sender and the perceived meaning of a receiver are the same. There are particular ways and skills we need to employ to ensure its effectiveness.

The process of communication, as illustrated in Figure 1, comprises a number of essential components identified as follows:

*Figure 1. The communication process*



Information is one of the most important elements in the structure of communication. The entire process is reduced to several basic stages in the existence of information: the process of creating information; transmission of information; education on the use of information; and the stage of incorporation of information into a system. Information, as a starting element in defining the structure of communications, has its own authentic structure. These are assumptions, facts, attitudes, appeals, messages and conclusions. As information is defined as any newly acquired knowledge or idea, communicated in a symbolic form, which enables the exchange of such acquired knowledge in the process of communication between individuals and groups, the basic function of information is to increase the user's level of knowledge about objectively given reality, and thus to contribute to social practice.

The theory of information has established basic prerequisites that should be met when shaping information, so that they can contribute to the efficiency of the information act. The renowned communication scholar Willbur Schramm (1954), noted that at least four conditions are important for message effectiveness. Namely, only messages that are shaped in a way that provides the information with the status of a message capable of attracting the attention of the recipient to whom it is addressed are effective; the messages that are communicated with a symbolic system of meaning, which are common both to the source of the information and to those for whom the message is addressed; messages that directly relate to the needs of those to whom they are directed, and together with that suggest means to satisfy those needs; and finally, messages that suggest only means to satisfy the needs that correspond to the state of the group to which the recipients of the information belong, i.e. the recipients.

According to Duško Bjelica (2012), "communication" means the path taken by the subject of the information with the information itself to and from the place where it is created, as well as the place itself as its setting, and to the place where it is incorporated into a certain sports or other system, as well as the parts of that system that are a direct product of that information.

#### 4. MASS MEDIA, MASS COMMUNICATION AND SPORTS

"Medium" means "middle", i.e. an environment or a set of conditions in which something happens (in the sense of discourse), a person who can be an intermediary between something or someone in spiritualistic or other events, something that carries energy either in a concrete work process or in a spiritual sense, to a means of mass communication of a message into a signal that can be sent over a channel.

The term "media" is broader than the term "mass media". It is interpreted differently depending on the scientific field or the field of social action. In communication studies, a medium is basically a technical or physical means of transforming a message into a signal that can be sent over a channel.

The term "media" can be defined in at least in four ways:

- in the physiological sense, when the medium denotes communication: auditory, visual, tactile, olfactory and their mutual relationship (intermediality);
- in the physical sense, when the medium is an object with the help of which any new message is expressed: stone, color, tone, language;
- in the technological sense, when the medium denotes a means of mediation between symbolic production and consumption; and
- in a sociological sense, when the medium is understood as an institutional-organizational framework for communication, so we talk about economy, politics, science, education, sport... In this way, the term "media" is equated with the term discourse, which is interpreted more broadly, but it is possible.

Mass media are social institutions that impartially, instantly and publicly mediate information with a large, heterogeneous and diverse public. They are a forum of public speech in which the process of public consensus between the government and the public is violated. In democratic societies, the mass media, as mediators between the government and the public, should inform the public about all relevant topics of interest to the social community, including sports, in order to properly form the public opinion of the citizens.

In order to deal scientifically with the complex influence of the media, James Halloran (O' Sullivan, Dutton, Rayner, 2003) saw the way out in abandoning the habit of thinking about what the media does to people and replacing it with the idea of what people do with media. He believed that the belief that the media are all-powerful should be replaced by observing them as constructors of social reality, as sources that in different ways with means, with symbolic languages and with technical means, with the help of a media discourse based on an ideology of power, they construct reality.

Mass communications means the organized and institutionalized transmission of all forms of information using means of communication. Mass communication is interested in sources and users, function and goals, channels and codes, context and references, and the consequences of communication, taking into account that each medium encodes reality in a different way and in that sense affects, to a surprising degree, the content of the communication (Adjaip-Veličkovski, 2020). The means of mass communication include: film, television, radio, press, literature, advertisements with different contents and other means of mass communication.

Mass communications in sports imply modern technologies in the field of television channels, the press, radio waves, the Internet, as well as processes, dissemination and dispersion of information related to a sporting event (Ilić, Sobek, 2014). In the information age, sports and media are in a dialectical interdependence, so that the media influence sports, but also, sports events as mass phenomena must be under full media attention. The modern world is characterized by both mass sports and mass communications. The development of information technologies and telecommunications create conditions where every individual can "participate" in almost any sporting event, following the results, reading match reports, watching TV broadcasts or attending numerous matches of their own choice.

Communicating about sport comes as naturally to some as talking about the weather. Sport offers us a way to connect to others. Moreover, sport communication represents a distinctive form of communication. Sport connects us to community, sport is entertainment, and sport even offers us a platform for social justice and helps our communities through the entertainment of sport to work toward cultural equalities (Coombs, 2022).

Information from sports matches can be: indirect and direct. The information of an immediate nature is information "in real time" about the playing of a match, while the indirect information represents reports from sports events, as well as comments from them.

According to the opinions of well-known sports theorists, although with many difficulties, sports secured a significant place in the mass media, so that today there is already talk of a "sports industry" consisting of sports equipment manufacturers and service providers related to sports (Ilić, Sobek, 2014).

Sports mega-events are highlights of sports communication, illustrating the change of media technology and with that sports communication. The enormous growth of information, of comments, and conversational talks in the

permanent flow on diverse social media platforms demonstrate some new ways for transmitting a major sports event to a broader public (Butterworth, 2021).

The relationship between sports and mass communications is indicated by the fact that no significant sporting event can take place without being offered as information to the widest number of people globally. The offer of sports information nowadays does not lag behind information from the field of politics, economics, or any other field. Sports communication during major sports events has been revolutionized by the rise of social media in many ways.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The modern world is characterized by both mass sports and mass communications. The development of information technologies and telecommunications create conditions where every individual can "participate" in almost any sporting event, following the results, reading match reports, watching TV broadcasts or attending numerous matches of their own choice.

Communication between sport and the widest audience is institutionalized and is part of the general system of mass communications. Within those frameworks, the media significantly contribute to the great popularity and social importance of sport, but also its economic frameworks. The increased interest in sports has very important impact on the progression of the social significance of the media, because with the increase in the number of consumers of sports, the media is increasingly expanding its market.

Hence, it can be concluded that the sports need the media, not only for its self-promotion, but also because it is easier to attract sponsors, and the media needs the sport because of the attractive contents, which increase the number of their audience. Finally, like any mass phenomenon, sport will increasingly take place in all means of mass communications (TV, radio, press, internet, sports publications, CDs, DVDs, etc.) in the future.

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