The journal « sports creativity »

Volume: (17) / N°: (01)-(2026), p 190-210

Media and Elite Sports: Effects and Challenges

وسائل الإعلام ورياضة النخبة: التأثيرات والتحديات

Herizi abderraouf[1] . naceri zohra[2]

[1]A laboratory for analyzing, modeling, and designing media products in the economic, social, and political fields. Phd university ben khaldoune tiaret

abderraouf.herizi@univ-tiaret.dz

[2]A laboratory for analyzing, modeling, and designing media products in the economic, social, and political fields.

Phd university ben khaldoune tiaret

zohra.naceri@univ-tiaret.dz

Received: 12/01/2025 Accepted: 12/02/2025 Published:30/03/2026

Abstract

This study examines the role of media in elite sports, focusing on its positive impacts and the challenges it entails. Traditional and digital media have become essential in reporting sports news, shaping athletes' public image, enhancing audience engagement, and supporting professional sports.

The study explores media's influence on athletes and audiences, including the promotion of elite athletes, support for their professional careers, increasing the popularity of professional sports, and attracting investments and sponsorships. Conversely, the study addresses challenges related to media pressure and sensationalism, which may affect athletes' performance and audience behavior, emphasizing the importance of adhering to ethical standards in sports media.

The study aims to provide recommendations for promoting responsible media practices, ensuring the development of elite sports, supporting athletes, spreading positive sports values, and achieving sustainable

Corresponding author: herizi abderraouf , e-mail: abderraouf.herizi@univ-tiaret.dz

- Publication rights are reserved for M'sila University - website. https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/PresentationRevue/316

and effective audience engagement.

Keywords :Sports media - Elite sports -Digital media- Media coverage- Media impacts

الملخص : تتناول هذه الدراسة دور وسائل الإعلام في رياضة النخبة، مع التركيز على تأثيراتها الإيجابية والتحديات المصاحبة لها. فقد أصبحت وسائل الإعلام التقليدية والرقمية أساسية في نقل الأخبار الرياضية، وتشكيل الصورة العامة للرياضيين، وتعزيز تفاعل الجمهور، ودعم الرياضة الاحترافية.

وتستكشف الدراسة تأثير الإعلام على الرياضيين والجماهير، بما في ذلك الترويج للرياضيين النخبة، ودعم مسيرتهم المهنية، وزيادة شعبية الرياضة الاحترافية، وجذب الاستثمارات والرعايات. وعلى الجانب الآخر، تتناول الدراسة التحديات المرتبطة بالضغط الإعلامي والتهويل الإعلامي، التي قد تؤثر على أداء الرياضيين وسلوك الجمهور، مع التأكيد على أهمية الالتزام بالمعايير الأخلاقية في الإعلام الرياضي.

وتهدف الدراسة إلى تقديم توصيات لتعزيز ممارسات إعلامية مسؤولة، وضمان تطوير رياضة النخبة، ودعم الرياضيين، ونشر القيم الرياضية الإيجابية، وتحقيق تفاعل جماهيري مستدام وفعال.

الكلمات المفتاحية : وسائل الإعلام الرياضية – رياضة النخبة – الإعلام الرقمي – التغطية الإعلامية – تأثيرات الإعلام

Introduction

In modern times, sports have witnessed remarkable development due to technological advancements and the emergence of modern media, making media an essential tool for reporting sports information, promoting sporting events, and shaping the public image of elite athletes and teams. The role of media is no longer limited to reporting match results; it now extends to influencing public opinion, motivating audiences, supporting professional sports, and contributing to attracting investments and sports sponsorships.

Elite sports, characterized by high-level competition and advanced professionalism, receive extensive media coverage due to their athletic achievements and the public and economic interest they generate. Despite the positive impact of media in enhancing the popularity of sports and developing

athletes' careers, this media role is not without challenges, including psychological pressure on athletes, media exaggeration, and fan fanaticism, which may affect performance and sporting behavior.

Based on this, the present study aims to analyze the role of media in elite sports, explore its positive effects on athletes and audiences, discuss the accompanying challenges, and emphasize the importance of responsible sports media in supporting both sports and athletes alike.

Based on this, the aim of this article is to highlight the role of media in elite sports, examine its positive aspects and the associated challenges, while emphasizing the importance of responsible sports media in serving both sports and athletes alike.

Problem Statement

Media, both traditional and digital, is considered one of the most influential actors in the elite sports ecosystem. Its role has extended beyond merely broadcasting competitions and sporting events to directly influencing the development of sports, shaping athletes' professional images, and impacting public perception. Intensive media coverage contributes to increasing the popularity of elite sports, attracting sponsorships and investments, and raising public interest, which positively affects the development of sports infrastructure and provides both material and moral support to athletes.

At the same time, the media plays a central role in shaping sports public opinion. It influences the agenda of sports interests and affects the audience's attitudes toward athletes, teams, and sporting events through its discourse, presentation methods, and interactions on digital platforms. This role may have positive

effects, such as promoting sports values and competitive spirit, or negative effects, including sensationalism, media bias, and exaggeration, which may harm athletes' reputations or impose psychological and professional pressure on them. Moreover, the digital media environment introduces new challenges, including the rapid circulation of information, the spread of inaccurate news, and increased direct interaction between athletes and the public, which intensifies scrutiny and public criticism. Ethical and professional issues also arise, such as respecting privacy, maintaining media responsibility, and balancing freedom of expression with the protection of athletes.

Therefore, the central problem of this study revolves around the extent to which traditional and digital media influence the development of elite sports, support athletes, and shape sport's public opinion, while highlighting the challenges associated with this media role. The study aims to understand the nature of the relationship between media and elite sports in a way that enhances its positive aspects and mitigates potential negative effects.

To what extent do traditional and digital media influence the development of elite sports, support athletes, and shape public opinion, and what challenges accompany this media role?

Study Questions:

How do media channels contribute to promoting professionalism in elite sports?

-What is the impact of media coverage on elite athletes' performance and behavior?

-What pressures and challenges do athletes and audiences face as a result of media influence?

Study Objectives

- Analyze the role of various types of media (traditional and digital) in shaping the image of elite sports and professional athletes.
- Examine the media's impact on athletic performance, fame, and the professional identity of elite athletes.
- Identify the relationship between the media and sports audiences and how media coverage contributes to increased viewership and fan support.
- Explore the media-related challenges facing elite sports, such as psychological pressure, reputation damage, and media bias.
- Assess the impact of social media on changing the nature of the relationship between elite athletes, the media, and the public.
- Analyze the economic dimension of sports media and its role in sponsorship, investment, and sports marketing.
- Identify the ethical and professional aspects of media coverage of elite sports.
- Propose mechanisms and solutions to strengthen the positive relationship between the media and elite sports in ways that promote sports development and protect athletes.

Key Concepts and Terminology

Concept of Media

Media refers to the means of communicating information, news, ideas, and messages to the public with the purpose of educating, guiding, entertaining, and shaping public opinion. It includes a wide range of channels, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and contemporary digital platforms including social media. Media serves as a key instrument in forming social,

political, and cultural awareness, transmitting societal values, and influencing the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and communities.

(Fawzi, Ahmed., 2018,p135-137)

Academically, media is defined as:

"An organized process of delivering information and messages to specific or general audiences, with the aim of influencing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

Media can be classified into two main categories: traditional media, which encompasses print journalism, radio, and television, and digital media, which includes websites, online platforms, and social media. The rise of digital media has fundamentally transformed the way audiences interact with media content, enabling more immediate, interactive, and personalized engagement.

.(Smith, L. 2020. *P24*)

Concept of Sports Media

Sports media is a specialized branch of media that focuses on reporting, analyzing, and presenting news and information related to sports, athletes, and competitions. Its objectives include providing sports education, entertaining audiences, enhancing audience engagement, and promoting the recognition and popularity of athletes and teams.

Sports media is regarded as a strategic tool for shaping public opinion in sports, directing attention toward various disciplines, and enhancing fan support, sponsorship, and investment in sports. It also plays a vital role in promoting sports values and fostering a competitive spirit among athletes and audiences. At

the same time, intensive media coverage can place considerable pressure on athletes, often driven by the emphasis on fame and sensationalism.

Sports media can be divided into:

-**Traditional media**: such as print sports journalism, radio, and television.

-**Digital media**: including websites, sports apps, and social media platforms, which have increased the speed of sports news circulation and enabled direct interaction between audiences and athletes(Ali, Mohamed, 2020a,p122-123)

Concept of Digital Media

Digital media refers to a form of media that utilizes digital technology and the Internet to disseminate information, news, and messages to the public. It is characterized by its speed, interactivity, and capacity to reach large and diverse audiences. Digital media encompasses websites, applications, social media platforms, live streaming services, and various other digital platforms.(ali,mohamed,2020 b,p25-27)

Digital media is recognized as an effective tool for transforming the ways audiences interact with media content, enabling real-time communication and facilitating faster and more impactful distribution of information. It also enhances access to news and information, allows for content analysis and comparison, shapes public opinion, and provides new opportunities for advertising, sponsorship, and marketing.

(Kennedy, John., 2018.p21)

Digital media has several key characteristics:

-Interactivity: allowing audiences to comment, share, and participate in content.

-Speed: faster dissemination of news and information compared to traditional media.

-Customization: the ability to provide content tailored to audience interests.

-Multiplicity: multiple digital channels and platforms for distributing information.

Concept of Elite Sport

Elite sport refers to sports practiced at the highest levels of professionalism and excellence, involving athletes with exceptional skills who participate in major national and international competitions. It is characterized by high performance standards, intensive training, rigorous competition, and a strong emphasis on results and achievements that enhance the reputation of both athletes and their countries.

(Ali, Mohamed. 2020c.p125-130)

Elite sport is regarded as a key driver for the overall development of sports, inspiring other athletes, strengthening national identity, and promoting core sports values such as discipline, dedication, and perseverance. It is also closely connected to sports media and the sports economy, as it helps attract sponsorships and investments while shaping a positive image for both athletes and audiences.

.(Collins, D., Cruickshank, A., & Jordet, G. 2019,p29)

Elite sport can be classified into several levels:

-International level: participation in the Olympic Games and world championships.

-National level: major competitions at the country level.

-Academic or institutional level: including top-performing athletes in universities and major clubs.(Brown, David., 2017,p12)

Concept of Media Coverage

Media coverage refers to the process by which the media delivers news, information, and events to the public, determining which aspects to highlight and how the information is presented. It is considered a crucial tool for shaping the public image of events, individuals, and groups, influencing public opinion, and establishing the priorities of media attention.

(Fawzi ahmed , 2019,p121-123)

Media coverage differs depending on the type of media employed, whether traditional media, such as print journalism, radio, and television, or digital media, including websites and social media platforms. The characteristics of each medium influence the speed of information delivery, the level of audience interaction, and the overall reach of media messages.

.(Harrison, 2017,p-18)

The main elements of media coverage include:

-Selecting the topics and events deemed worthy of publication or broadcast.

-Determining the angles and perspectives through which news will be presented.

-Designing the messages and style of presentation suitable for the target audience.

In sports, media coverage plays a significant role in increasing the popularity of teams and athletes, shaping public opinion about sports, and influencing the perception of athletes and teams. Depending on how the media presents the information, coverage can contribute to either a positive or negative image.
(Smith, , 2019, p22)

Types of Media and Their Impact on Elite Sport

The media play a central role in the development of elite sport, as they help promote it, enhance its professionalism, and shape the public image of athletes while influencing audience perceptions, funding, and investment in sports. Media outlets are no longer mere transmitters of sporting events; they have become key actors in shaping the sports ecosystem and setting its priorities. Given the diversity of media types and their distinct functions, their impact varies—ranging from supporting professionalism to, in some cases, contributing to the marginalization of certain sports or athlete groups.

1. Visual Media (Television)

Television is regarded as the most influential medium in elite sport. It plays a crucial role in broadcasting major tournaments, enhancing audience engagement, generating substantial revenue through broadcasting rights, and promoting star athletes, thereby contributing to the creation of a sports celebrity culture. Television also affects competition schedules and organizational arrangements to align with media requirements. However, this significant influence can simultaneously reinforce the marginalization of less popular sports

and limit the visibility of women's sports and certain athletic categories, as media policies are frequently driven by profit motives and audience ratings.

2. Audio Media (Radio)

Audio media play an important role in providing live and rapid coverage of sporting events, enhancing sports follow-up, particularly in remote areas, and contributing to match analysis and the dissemination of sports culture. Despite its significance in broadening access to sports coverage, radio has a relatively limited influence on elite sport compared to television, making it less effective in challenging dominant patterns of marginalization or offering adequate exposure to non-mainstream sports.

3. Print Media (Press)

Print media play a significant role in providing in-depth analysis of athletic performance and results, documenting sporting achievements, and shaping public opinion while exercising oversight over sports institutions. However, sports journalism often reproduces dominant media narratives by focusing on particular sports or clubs, thereby contributing to the marginalization of other elite sports that do not receive equivalent media attention.

.(Aliyev, H.E., & Mammadov 2022.p34-35.)

4. Digital Media (Internet and Social Media)

Digital media have gained significant influence in elite sport by facilitating direct interaction between athletes and fans, enabling personal promotion and the development of athletes' personal brands, and allowing the rapid dissemination of news, images, and videos. Additionally, digital platforms create opportunities

for less popular sports to gain visibility. However, the reliance on algorithms and follower counts can perpetuate digital marginalization, as more popular sports continue to dominate online exposure.

5. New Media and Specialized Platforms

This category encompasses specialized sports platforms and digital channels, which are distinguished by their precise and in-depth coverage, support for professionalism through technical and statistical analysis, and promotion of emerging talents and sports disciplines. However, the limited reach of these platforms compared to mass media diminishes their overall impact in addressing media marginalization, despite their qualitative contribution to the development of elite sport.

.(Zawi zaid, 2022. P-20-28).

Analytical Conclusion

It becomes evident that media, in all its forms, constitute a fundamental pillar in enhancing professionalism in elite sport. At the same time, however, they contribute to creating media imbalances that lead to the marginalization of certain sports and groups. Therefore, achieving balanced sports development requires the adoption of fair media policies based on diversity and equity in coverage

Positive Impacts of Media on Elite Sport (Expanded Version)

The media play a central role in the development of elite sport and in enhancing its level of professionalism. Their influence extends beyond the simple broadcasting of sporting events, as they have become key actors in shaping the

public image of sports and athletes. One of the most notable positive effects of media on elite sport is the improvement of sports awareness and public knowledge. This is achieved through the dissemination of sports culture, the explanation of rules and regulations, and the analysis of training methods and athletic performance. Such coverage enhances the audience's understanding of sports and encourages more informed and active engagement with competitions.

Furthermore, the media play a significant role in expanding the audience and generating greater interest in various sports, whether through live television broadcasts or digital platforms. This increased attention motivates sports federations and clubs to enhance the quality of competitions and tournaments, making them more appealing to both the public and investors. Research indicates that media coverage improves opportunities for funding and sponsorship, as tournaments and athletes are better positioned to attract sponsors and investors, which in turn positively impacts sports infrastructure, access to advanced equipment, and overall professional development.

.(bouali foula. *2024,p47-49*.)

In addition, the media play a crucial role in constructing a professional image for athletes by showcasing their achievements and skills while emphasizing their discipline and professional ethics. This strengthens athletes' social standing and increases their opportunities for professional contracts and personal sponsorships. Media also help motivate youth and women to participate in sports, as successful coverage provides role models and encourages the adoption

of healthy and active lifestyles. Through digital media and social networking platforms, it has also become possible to highlight less popular or emerging sports, creating a more balanced distribution of attention and offering new talents opportunities to gain recognition on both local and international stages.

Overall, the media act as a bridge between elite sport and the public, serving as both an economic and social catalyst that supports professional development, promotes sports values, and enhances community engagement. This underscores the essential role of media in achieving sustainable sports development and highlights their significance in building a comprehensive and balanced sports ecosystem. .(Al-Thubaiti. 2020, pp. 293–312.)

Media Challenges and Pressures in Elite Sport (Expanded Version)

Elite sport is increasingly subjected to intense pressures and challenges due to the pervasive influence of both traditional and digital media. One of the most significant sources of this pressure is the constant scrutiny faced by star athletes, which elevates expectations from fans, sponsors, and sporting organizations. Such heightened attention often leads to psychological stress, performance anxiety, and a greater susceptibility to injuries, particularly in sports that involve high physical demands and intense competition. (Aliyev & Mammadov, 2022.36-37).

In addition to individual pressures, teams and sports organizations face institutional pressures arising from media coverage and commercial interests. Broadcasting schedules, prime-time event slots, and competition calendars are often dictated by the potential for high viewership rather than athletes' physical

readiness or the principles of fair competition. These dynamics can undermine optimal performance conditions and foster an environment in which entertainment value takes precedence over athletic integrity.

(Al-Thubaiti, 2020.p293–312).

Moreover, specific categories of sport, particularly women's sports and less commercially popular disciplines, are subject to systematic media marginalization. Limited media coverage reduces opportunities for sponsorship, hinders fan engagement, and diminishes visibility for emerging talents. This selective representation not only reinforces inequalities within the sporting landscape but also constrains the development of professional pathways for athletes outside mainstream competitions. (Zawi, 2022,p58-65).

While digital media platforms and social networks provide unprecedented opportunities for direct interaction with fans, personal branding, and the promotion of less mainstream sports, they also introduce new challenges. Algorithms that prioritize content based on popularity and engagement metrics tend to favor already popular sports, inadvertently perpetuating the marginalization of niche disciplines. (Bouali, 2024,p142-146).

Additionally, the immediacy of online media contributes to continuous performance evaluation, intense scrutiny of minor errors, and the rapid viral amplification of mistakes, further exacerbating psychological pressure on athletes. The cumulative effect of these pressures is multifaceted: athletes must manage both mental and physical demands, sports organizations must balance commercial incentives with competitive integrity, and less mainstream sports

face reduced visibility and limited opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive media policies that prioritize athlete well-being, ensure equitable coverage across all disciplines, and strike a balance between entertainment value and the authentic principles of sport. Such strategies are crucial not only for sustaining professionalism in elite sport but also for fostering inclusive and balanced sports development that empowers all athletes and sporting communities.

Recommendations

1- Develop Balanced and Inclusive Media Policies

- Sports federations and media organizations should implement policies that ensure fair and comprehensive coverage of all sports and athlete categories, including women's sports and less popular disciplines, to reduce media marginalization.
- Media coverage decisions should consider audience interest and commercial value as supporting factors rather than the primary determinant of visibility.

2-Protect Athletes' Mental and Physical Health

- Establish psychological support programs to help athletes cope with media pressure, public scrutiny, and performance expectations.
- Schedule competitions in a way that respects athletes' physical and mental readiness, rather than purely following broadcasting or commercial interests.

3-Promote Responsible and Equitable Digital Media Use

- Encourage athletes and sports organizations to use digital platforms for positive promotion and fan engagement while minimizing exposure to harassment, trolling, or cyberbullying.
- Implement algorithms or media strategies that provide equitable exposure to less mainstream sports, rather than favoring only the most popular disciplines.

4-Provide Media Training for Athletes

- Conduct workshops and training programs to equip athletes with skills to handle interviews, press conferences, and social media interactions professionally, allowing them to manage their public image effectively.

5-Enhance Media Transparency and Accountability

- Establish monitoring bodies or committees to evaluate the objectivity and fairness of sports media coverage.
- Encourage sports journalism to focus on performance analysis, ethics, and values rather than merely sensationalism or celebrity culture.

6-Support Research and Evidence-Based Policy

- Promote academic studies on the impact of media on elite sport performance, audience perception, and professional development.
- Use research findings to inform media and sports policies that balance commercialization, public engagement, and athlete well-being.

7-Encourage Positive Role Modeling

- Use media coverage to highlight discipline, fair play, and achievements, creating role models for young athletes and promoting healthy sporting culture.

8-Foster Collaboration Between Media and Sports Organizations

- Develop partnerships to ensure media content aligns with athlete welfare, ethical standards, and the promotion of all sports categories, including those traditionally marginalized.

Conclusion

Based on the preceding analysis, it is evident that media plays a pivotal role in elite sport, as it can enhance professionalism, increase public awareness, and attract funding and sponsorship for athletes and competitions. Through extensive coverage and technical analysis, media contributes to building a professional image for athletes and highlighting their achievements and skills, while also providing a platform to promote less popular sports and encourage youth and women's participation in physical activity.

However, the relationship between media and elite sport is not without challenges. The intense media focus on popular sports and star athletes creates psychological and physical pressures and leads to the marginalization of certain sports and athlete groups. Moreover, digital platforms and algorithm-driven content often reinforce selective exposure, limiting the visibility and investment opportunities for less mainstream sports.

Therefore, developing balanced and fair media policies, protecting athletes' mental and physical health, providing media training, and promoting

academic research are essential steps toward ensuring sustainable and inclusive professionalism in elite sport. Ultimately, a responsible and integrated media approach, aligned with professional sports values, fosters sustainable sports development, enhances community engagement, and ensures equitable recognition for all athlete groups.

References

- Ali, Mohamed. (2020). *Contemporary sports media*. Amman, Jordan: Dar Al-Ma'refa.
- Ali, Mohamed. (2020). *Digital media: Theory and practice*. Amman, Jordan: Dar Al-Ma'refa.
- Ali, Mohamed. (2020). *Elite sport: Principles and applications*. Amman, Jordan: Dar Al-Ma'refa.
- Aliyev, H. E., & Mammadov, E. E. (2022). The impact of mass media on sport. *Sport Science Journal, 4*(2).
- Aliyev, H. E., & Mammadov, E. E. (2022). The impact of mass media on sport. *Scientific News of Academy of Physical Education and Sport*.
- Al-Thubaiti, Y. B. A. (2020). The effect of sports media on the attitudes of Umm Al-Qura University students toward sport. *Scientific Journal of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Helwan University, 89* (May).
- Bouali, F. (2024). The impact of the media on the image of sport in society. *Al-Hikma Journal for Studies and Research, 4*(7).
- Brown, D. (2017). *Elite sports structures*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Collins, D., Cruickshank, A., & Jordet, G. (Eds.). (2019). *Routledge handbook of elite sport performance*. Routledge.
- Fawzi, Ahmed. (2018). *Media and mass communication*. Cairo, Egypt: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi.
- Fawzi, ahmed. (2019). *Management and development in elite sport*. Cairo, Egypt: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi.

- Harrison, J. (2017). *Media coverage and society*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Kennedy, J. (2018). *Digital media: Principles and practices*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Smith, L. (2019). *Digital media and society*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Smith, L. (2020). *Digital media in sports*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zawi, Z. (2022). *Sports media and its role in attracting economic institutions to invest in sports clubs* (Master's thesis). University of El Oued, Algeria