

The Impact of New Media Context on Media Sports

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Abstract. With advancements in communication technologies such as network and telecommunications, coupled with the continuous evolution of media forms and transmission terminals, new media has rapidly encroached upon the traditional media landscape. Characterized by openness, mobility, convenience, and interactivity, it has eroded the dominance of traditional media, diverted its once-stable audience base, and gradually shaped new spheres of public opinion and discourse, resulting in a complex and competitive-cooperative dynamic among various media forms. A new communication paradigm and media ecology, shaped by the rise of new media, has emerged, showcasing distinct characteristics. This shift in the communication landscape has amplified the ritualistic and mythological dimensions of media sports, which now manifests in diverse content and formats. Within this evolving framework, media sports has undergone significant transformations in identity and function, content and form, the culture and public opinion it integrates and constructs, as well as its audience and sports fans in communication.

Keywords: New media context; media sports; communication landscape; communication.

1. The impact of new media on the communication landscape

1.1. Diversification of communication channels and methods

The low threshold, openness, and interactivity of new media have gradually intensified people's reliance on it, with new media increasingly becoming their primary source of information. Unlike traditional media, new media has sparked and catered to people's desire to explore media events, as well as their strong curiosity about others' viewpoints and evaluations. This has shifted people away from mere satisfaction with one-dimensional, simplistic, and passive information reception; instead, they are more focused on the hidden and interconnected aspects of media events, and feel free to voice their own opinions and critiques without reservation. In this new communication landscape, channels such as mobile phones, tablets, and PCs, along with platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and mobile apps, provide people with a wealth of information and fully functional services. This has in turn forced traditional media to undergo continuous transformation and reform, expand into diverse communication channels and methods, and enhance their competitiveness through integration and competition to consolidate their market position.

In the new media landscape, traditional outlets can no longer afford to remain complacent in their dominant position. Instead, they are actively pursuing integration with new media--expanding communication channels and methods while developing converged and omni-media strategies to adapt to the evolving ecosystem and intense market competition. [1]

1.2. Fragmentation of content and sources in communication

The openness and interactivity inherent in new media have created unprecedented platforms for public self-expression. Against the backdrop of globalization and digitalization, China's ongoing democratization process has further amplified this phenomenon. New media's distinctive immediacy and accessibility satisfy the growing public demand for personal expression while expanding the scope and depth of information dissemination. Unlike traditional communication paradigms, today's audiences can instantly share observations and experiences anytime, anywhere. Beyond personal narratives, they actively comment on and redistribute content related to social phenomena, media events, and global news. This paradigm transforms passive information consumers into instant

“citizen journalists”, exercising their right to express their opinions. From mundane daily occurrences to significant public affairs, every fragment of information may evolve into a societal focal point. New media has effectively dissolved geographical, temporal, and national boundaries, creating an explosive proliferation of interconnected information streams. This fragmentation and increasing complexity of content sources have fostered pluralism in public opinion. Consequently, traditional media’s authoritative discourse structure and dominance in shaping public opinion face unprecedented challenges. The gradual erosion of their influence--from being agenda-setters to losing discursive control--demands urgent attention from established media institutions.

1.3. The transformation of communicator roles

In the new communication landscape, audiences are no longer in a passive position of receiving information; while expressing their individuality and ideas, they yearn more for and pursue freedom of speech, freedom of thought, the ability to challenge authoritative information, and equal communication. On the basis of posting what they have seen and heard, audiences can also express their concern and suggestions about social public affairs through new media platforms, and even participate in them. People’s strong sense of self and subjectivity, as well as their initiative in pursuing the role of masters of society, are fully demonstrated in the new communication landscape. In the era of traditional media, although people could transmit information through means such as readers’ letters and telephone feedback, under the strong dominant position of traditional media, audiences were merely listeners in a weak position, and their desire for independent choice and feelings about what they had seen and heard were basically suppressed. In contrast, in the new communication landscape, the status of communication subjects has undergone great changes: audiences are both receivers and disseminators of information, while media organizations not only disseminate information but also need to promptly respond to and communicate on an equal basis with audience feedback. The shift in the status of communication subjects has made the information monopoly of traditional media a thing of the past; on the contrary, traditional media are instead constrained by audiences and the new media public opinion field, and even “led by the nose” by new media topics. In the new communication landscape, such strong public opinion influence of new media poses a challenge to traditional media. [2]

1.4. Pluralization of public discourse and decentralization of discourse power

The diversification of public discourse and decentralization of discourse power represent defining characteristics of the transformed media landscape. New media platforms have created expansive arenas for public expression while satisfying society’s growing demand for truth, equity and transparent dialogue. These dynamic digital forums amplify collective public sentiment beyond traditional barriers of gender, age, class or social status, reinforcing civic consciousness and significantly advancing social equity. Yet this democratized communication ecosystem simultaneously facilitates the rampant spread of misinformation, rumors and extremist ideologies--with substantial portions directly impacting institutional and governmental reputation. The capacity to implement timely, effective countermeasures against malicious content now critically determines the credibility and influence of public institutions. [3] Thus, while adapting to this new paradigm remains essential, the true imperative lies in proactively addressing its attendant challenges--only then can we truly harness its potential while mitigating its risks.

2. The impact of evolving communication patterns on media sports

2.1. Diversification of roles and functions in media sports

Prior to China’s reform and opening-up period, sports coverage was invariably framed within state ideology, with mass media projecting images of “political sports” and “major power sports”. This media sports narrative became shrouded in pervasive politicization, where reporting deliberately amplified positive, lofty and emotionally charged representations--subtle metaphors for national

image, international standing and political influence. The 1971 “Ping-Pong Diplomacy”, where “a small ball moved a big ball”, is hailed as a memorable episode in China’s diplomatic history. Back then, sports served primarily political and national interests.

During the reform and opening-up period, China began to implement the socialist market economic system, and at this time, sports also started to gradually emerge from the shadow of politics. Coupled with the fact that news and communication organizations began to move toward the stage of enterprise management and slowly adopted market-oriented operation models, the integration of sports and media set off a wave of sports enthusiasm. [4]

With the deepening of China’s economic system reform, the development of globalization, and the introduction of new communication technologies, sports and mass media have naturally merged. Sports news communication has thus taken on the responsibilities of providing sports information, promoting the sports spirit, and supervising undesirable phenomena. People learn about the current state of events and acquire sports knowledge through media sports, and pay attention to and view sports phenomena through a form of value guidance. At this time, sports in the media played a greater role in satisfying the public’s demand for sports information and exerting the social benefits of sports.

With the progressive marketization of news media, the influx of capitalist consumerist ideologies, and the growing influence of new media technologies, media sports has increasingly exhibited tendencies toward entertainment-driven commercialization. To capture audience attention, sports media now deliberately employs sensationalized narratives--emphasizing violence, suspense, and thrill-seeking imagery--designed to aggressively stimulate viewers’ visual and auditory senses.

2.2. Diversification of content and formats in media sports

During the print and broadcast media era, sports coverage maintained remarkable uniformity--both in content and delivery--with an overwhelming focus on major international tournaments, particularly those featuring Chinese athletes, where medal victories commanded disproportionate attention.

The television age, empowered by technological advancements, revolutionized sports communication. Dedicated sports channels and diversified programming emerged, offering comprehensive coverage spanning competitions, athletes, and disciplines alike. This transformation gradually demystified elite sports for mass audiences, bringing once-distant athletic pursuits and stars within reach. Television’s audiovisual immediacy created immersive viewing experiences that not only delivered spectacular sporting events but also kindled public enthusiasm for deeper sports engagement. Sports thus became increasingly accessible, gradually evolving from elite spectacle to commonplace leisure pursuit.

The new media era has ushered in unprecedented diversity in both the content and delivery of sports coverage. Gone are the days when audiences had to cluster around television sets for live broadcasts--now any mobile device becomes a portal to the action. The contemporary viewer needn’t search for kindred spirits; real-time commentary flows freely as spectators simultaneously consume events and articulate visceral reactions. Missed matches no longer spell irrevocable loss, with on-demand replays granting complete temporal control. This digital revolution has not only enriched sports content but also created vital emotional outlets, while collapsing the social distance between everyday fans and athletic icons--fostering a new paradigm of socialized interpersonal networks.

2.3. The shift in media sports audiences

During the print and radio broadcasting era, experiencing sports events required physical presence at the venue--a limitation completely transformed by digital convergence and economic globalization. Modern audiences not only access live competitions remotely but can replay key moments and engage in real-time digital commentary at will. This technological revolution has unveiled a vast, previously untapped spectator demographic--an invisible yet immense viewership that has become the primary focus for event organizers, media corporations, and advertisers alike. Consequently, the traditional live audience, once the cornerstone of sporting events, now finds its significance substantially diminished in this new calculus of mass digital engagement.

In fact, as digital screens are installed at venues to enhance the on-site viewing experience, or as people walk on the streets, gather in squares, parks, and bars--cheering and celebrating together in front of screens, only to become the focus of others' screens in turn--the line between on-site spectators and media sports viewers has grown blurred, with the two groups even able to switch roles at any moment. For media organizations, event organizers, and advertisers, the expansion of the audience--regardless of its type--remains their most anticipated and valued outcome, as it ties back to the core idea of the audience's dual identity.

2.4. The co-existence between media sports and consumerism

Consumerism, riding the tide of market economies and globalization, emerges as a postmodern ideology amplified by new communication technologies—one that prioritizes the satisfaction of stimulated desires over genuine needs. In this paradigm, a product's utility value becomes secondary to its symbolic significance. This cultivation of consumption desires operates in tandem with media amplification, where ostensibly “progressive” values actually reflect the collision between societal demands and gratification, driven fundamentally by profit motives. Within the new media landscape, ratings, click-through rates, and user traffic constitute the coveted “pie” for media entities and advertisers, with its perpetual expansion their paramount objective. The marriage of media sports and consumerism proves particularly effective in achieving this aim. Through sports' inherently appealing medium, consumerism deploys tactics of excitement, stimulation, and visceral appeal--packaging competitions, athletes, endorsements, cheerleaders, and tabloid content as commodified experiences, each subtly branded with consumerist symbolism. Audiences become immersed in narratives of intensity, violence, sexuality, and emotional manipulation, developing intense fascination with athletic celebrities. This dynamic enables media corporations and advertisers to capture public attention, thereby executing a fundamental alchemy: the commodification of audiences themselves. Through sports, the media successfully pursues profit, completing its cycle of exploitation. [5]

Media sports has successfully peddled consumerism to expand its audience reach and cultural capital, transforming from mere athletic competitions into a cultural vanguard--a trendsetting phenomenon commanding center stage. Consumerism, for its part, capitalizes on sports' inherent accessibility to cultivate an approachable facade, with audiences demonstrating remarkable receptiveness to this hybridized form of sports consumption. By leveraging sports as a familiar and engaging medium, consumerism presents itself in a more “approachable” light--something audiences eagerly embrace, especially when sports media embraces consumerist ideals. Riding the wave of new media technologies, media sports and consumerism have forged a mutually reinforcing alliance--a self-perpetuating ecosystem where commercial interests and cultural influence feed off each other in continuous symbiosis.

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