

## **Sport Communication**

The sport management research community has actively contributed to the field of sport communication between March 2023 and August 2023, publishing upwards of 40 articles across a variety of journals. This period, starting with the fourth issue of Sport Management Digest (SMD), has seen a broad array of researched topics, indicating an increasing interest and engagement in advancing knowledge within sport communication. Over this period, a few sport communication research works have been published in journals such as Journal of Sport Management, Sport Management Review, European Sport Management Quarterly, Journal of Global Sport Management, and others. Particularly, the two communication journals namely, Communication and Sport (C&S), and International Journal of Sport Communication (IJSC) have published 27 and 14 research articles respectively over the period of this fifth issue.

In the three issues of Communication & Sport (C&S) spanning from Volume 11 Issue 2 to Volume 11 Issue 4, the journal explored the complex dynamics of sports, media, and societal interactions, with a particular emphasis on the digital landscape. The scholarly works published in these issues can be broadly classified into six overarching groups, each encompassing a variety of articles that touch upon different facets of the sports communication domain. The themes identified from the articles cover areas such as social media and athlete representation, media framing and sports journalism, digital and social media education in sports, fan behavior and online communities, impact of technology and innovation in sports, and sociocultural aspects and identity in sports. These studies collectively underscore the intertwining of sports, media, and culture, highlighting the transformative role of digital platforms in shaping public perceptions, athlete-fan interactions, and the broader sports narrative.

In the two issues of International Journal of Sport Communication (IJSC) spanning from Volume 16 Issue 2 to Volume 16 Issue 3, the journal underscored the complexity of sports as a sociocultural phenomenon, highlighting the interdependence of sports, media, and societal dynamics. The journal's Issue number 4 has a highly recommended scholarly commentaries contributed by leading scholars in sport and social media scholarship. IJSC's research articles covered topics that can be broadly categorized

into six common topic areas encompassing the interactions between sport and media/social media, the societal and political dimensions of sports, fan behavior and motivation, representation and perception in sports, cultural and generational influences, as well as visual representation and branding in the sports context. The collection of these research papers highlights a multifaceted exploration of sports in contemporary society, emphasizing the significant interplay between sports, media, and the public.

The two journals, namely IJSC and C&S, combined covered a wide range of topics reflecting the diversity of issues explored by researchers in these journals. These topics collectively fall under seven broadly categorized but inter-related themes, namely:

- a) media representation and framing,
- b) social media and digital communication,
- c) fan behavior and engagement,
- d) sociocultural aspects and identity,
- e) organizational and professional aspects,
- f) sports, society, and politics, and
- g) mental health in sports.

From the seven identified themes, this issue of SMD focuses on the topic of sociocultural aspects and identity. Under this specific theme of "sociocultural aspects and identity", seven articles (five in IJSC and two in C&S) have been published. The articles explored the intricate relationship between sport, media, and the construction of cultural and national identities across different regions. Sitong Guo's "Sport Fan Motivation" provided a comparative analysis of basketball fan behavior in the U.S. and China, delving into how regional affiliations shape fandom. Eleanor Crabill, Callie Maddox, and Adam Beissel's work on the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup bid process explored the coverage of online news media in Australia and New Zealand, highlighting how national pride is woven into sports narratives. Kenon A. Brown, Nicky Lewis, Matthew Barnidge, and Courtney D. Boman's examination of the NBA's racial justice initiatives during the 2020 playoffs shed light on how political affiliations intersect with sports fandom and perceptions of social justice movements. Jonas Biel, Tobias Finger, Vincent Reinke, Jennifer Amann,

Arne Niemann, and Marc Jungblut delved into German football media, exploring the media's role in constructing a European identity through sports. Bo Li, Olan K.M. Scott, Jerred Junqi Wang, and Liang Xiao offered insights into the generational differences in media consumption during the Tokyo 2020 Olympics in China. Muhammad Fahad Humayun's research on sports journalists' Twitter feeds explored how social media contributes to the shaping of national identity through sports narratives. Lastly, Sitong Guo and Qingru Xu studied nationalism in Chinese Central Television's broadcasts of the 2018 Winter Olympics, evaluating the extent of nationalistic sentiments in state media. Together, these articles underscore the powerful role of media in shaping sport, cultural identities, and societal narratives across different contexts and regions.

As can be recalled, articles covered in Issue 1 (the sport communication section) of SMD focused on topic areas such as media representation of disability, mental illness, and women in sport; and media coverage and consumption of sport (TV and social media). Issue 2 articles focused on topic areas such as women sport and sport media, mental health and sport media, mega-events and media coverage, race and sport media, forms of communications in sport, COVID-19 and sport through media, sport and politics, the profession of sport journalism, and sporting success and coping with tragedy. Issue 3 articles focused on topic areas such as gender representation in media coverage, race and sport media, the profession of sport journalism, media coverage of concussion, mega/major-events and media coverage, forms of communications in sport, social media use in sport, and social psychology and sport media. Issue 4 identified topics such as media content creation, race and sport, sport and mediatization, sport fan-ship, media portrayal, sport and politics, sport media and doping, and occupation and the work environment. Issue 4 focused on media content creation, and race and sport media have been selected. As pointed out above, this Issue 5 focused articles that covered the intricate relationship between sport, media, and the construction of cultural and national identities across different regions.

The seven focal articles of this issue have been contributed by a total of 21 authors from 12 different universities (namely (namely, Bradley University, Brighton University, Brock University, Eastern Washington University, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität

München, Miami University, University of Alabama, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Kentucky, University of Michigan, University of Technology Sydney). The studies have been guided by theories, frameworks, and models that included: Elias's Habitus, Generational Cohort Theory, Neoliberal Feminist Theory, Postfeminism Framework, Psychological Continuum Model, Social Identity Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Six of the seven studies adopted a quantitative method employing instruments such as survey and textual analysis.

The studies provided us with a few important insights. The insights are: (a) Li et al.'s study highlighted that in China, Generations X, Y, and Z predominantly engaged with the 2020 Olympic Games through social media, TV, and digital media, showcasing distinct patterns of media usage across the different age groups. (b) Crabill et al.'s study brought to attention critical questions regarding the role of the Australian and New Zealand sports media, highlighting concerns about whether these platforms serve primarily as vehicles for circulating strategic narratives from the bid committee, and whether they circulate a postfeminist celebration of women's sport mega events that uncritically circulates specious claims of women's empowerment, participation growth, and commercial benefits of such events. (c) Biel et al.'s study showed that the structural Europeanization of football is mirrored in the German sports media, potentially reinforcing existing sporting and economic inequalities. (d) Brown et al.'s study showed that both fandom and political identity play significant roles in shaping reactions to the NBA's racial justice efforts. However, the dominant factor varies between Democrats and Republicans, highlighting the complexity of the relationship between sports, politics, and social justice activism. (e) Guo's study reported that geographic locality plays a significant role in predicting motivational differences among casual and moderate fans, though this is not the case for loyal fans. (f) Humayun's study revealed potential national differences in sports journalism practices and emphasized the impact of the chosen media platform on the mediated construction of national identity. (g) Guo and Xu's study reported that Chinese competitors received more name mentions despite their relatively lesser medal achievements compared to their foreign counterparts on China Central Television (CCTV) Olympic primetime coverage during the 2018 Winter Olympics.

### **Annotated bibliography**

**Li, B., Scott, O. K., Wang, J. J., & Xiao, L. (2023). Understanding Chinese Consumers' Media Behaviors During Tokyo 2020: An Exploration of Media Consumption Among Different Generations. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 1(aop), 1-13.**

These four authors from three different universities (Miami University, Brock University, University of Technology Sydney) came together to investigate how Chinese Olympic audiences embraced different media platforms to consume the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory and Generational Cohort Theory, the authors conducted a quantitative study adopting a survey instrument and collecting data from 383 Chinese participants. The study reported that social media, TV, and digital media were the predominant platforms for watching the 2020 Olympic Games in China, with notable differences in usage across Generations X, Y, and Z. Each generation exhibited unique media engagement patterns, though the degree of usage varied. Furthermore, the study highlighted the consistent popularity of traditional sports like badminton and table tennis across all age groups, underlining their cultural significance in China. In essence, the results provide insight into China's media consumption during the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, showcasing both common preferences and generation-specific behaviors.

**Crabill, E., Maddox, C., & Beissel, A. (2023). We Did It: A Content Analysis of Australian and New Zealand Online News Media Coverage of the Bid Process for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 16(1), 53-63.**

In this collaborative study, these three authors (from Miami University, Oxford, OH,) examined the online news media coverage related to the Australia–New Zealand joint bid for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. Guided by neoliberal feminist theory and postfeminism framework, they explored how discourses and narratives surrounding women's empowerment

were created and distributed through popular online media outlets in Australia and New Zealand. The method of investigation was a thorough qualitative content analysis, which included 77 domestic online news articles published in the wake of the bid and hosting announcement for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. The authors identified three predominant themes in the media coverage: the potential for creating opportunities for women and girls in sports, the legacy outcomes anticipated from the event, and the commercial benefits tied to hosting the World Cup. However, they noted absence of critical engagement from the media in relation to evaluating the initiatives, claims, and promises made about the social and economic impacts of the event. A mere 2.5% of all analyzed online news articles delved into meaningful discussions, analyses, or critiques of these aspects. The study brought to attention critical questions regarding the role of the Australian and New Zealand sports media, highlighting concerns about whether these platforms serve primarily as vehicles for circulating strategic narratives from the bid committee, and whether they circulate a postfeminist celebration of women's sport mega events that uncritically circulates specious claims of women's empowerment, participation growth, and commercial benefits of such events.

**Biel, J., Finger, T., Reinke, V., Amann, J., Niemann, A., & Jungblut, M. (2023). *Becoming European Through Football Media? Representations of Europe in German Football News Coverage. International Journal of Sport Communication, 16(2), 202-214.***

In this study, the six authors from three universities (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Brighton University, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München) explored how men's elite club football in Europe and its media coverage influence fans' perceptions of Europe and their sense of identity. They highlight the sport's profound transformation toward Europeanization over the past few decades and recognize football's role in shaping collective identities. The researchers conducted a quantitative analysis of text-based online news media

from selected German outlets, aiming to understand the extent and patterned variation in the media representation of Europe within football news articles. The study showed that the structural Europeanization of football is mirrored in the German sports media, potentially reinforcing existing sporting and economic inequalities. The findings are specific to the selected country case, media sources, and time frame, and a more extensive analysis could provide deeper insights into the dynamics of European representation in sports media. By examining these patterns, the study points out the selective nature of media coverage in German football news, suggesting that this could influence fans' perceptions and feelings of connection to Europe through the lens of football.

**Brown, K. A., Lewis, N., Barnidge, M., & Boman, C. D. (2022). Black Lives Matter to the NBA: The Impact of Sport Fanship and Political Affiliation on the Perception of the NBA's Racial Justice Initiatives During the 2020 Playoff Bubble. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 16(2), 121-135.**

This study, conducted by a team of researchers from the University of Alabama and the University of Kentucky, explored the nuanced and complex relationship between sports fanship, political affiliation, and perceptions of the NBA's racial justice initiatives during the 2020 Playoff Bubble. Considering the increasing intersection of sports and politics, particularly in the realm of racial justice, the authors aim to investigate how individual identification with both the NBA and political parties can shape perceptions and reactions to the league's racial justice initiatives. Guided by social identity theory, the study methodologically engaged a national convenience sample of 518 participants, sourced through Amazon Mechanical Turk. The results of the study provide nuanced insights, demonstrating that both fanship and political identity play significant roles in shaping reactions to the NBA's racial justice efforts. However, the dominant factor varies between Democrats and Republicans, highlighting the complexity of the

relationship between sports, politics, and social justice activism. This study stands as a valuable contribution to the field, offering a deeper understanding of how sports leagues' social advocacy efforts are perceived across different segments of society, and emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach when navigating the intersection of sports, politics, and social justice.

**Guo, S. (2022). Sport Fan Motivation: A Comparison of Local, Nonlocal, and Distant National Basketball Association Fans in the United States and China. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 16(1), 43-52.**

In this study, a researcher from Bradley University explored sport fan motivation across different geographic and cultural contexts, focusing on fans of the National Basketball Association (NBA). The study categorized NBA fans into three distinct groups based on their geographic proximity to the team they support: local fans (U.S.-based fans supporting a local team), nonlocal fans (U.S.-based fans supporting a nonlocal team), and distant fans (China-based fans). To assess the psychological involvement of these fan groups with their chosen teams, the author employed the psychological continuum model, which categorizes fans as either casual, moderate, or loyal based on their level of psychological involvement. Online survey was delivered on both United States and Chinese websites. A total of 513 people participated in this study: U.S. local fans (n = 158), U.S. nonlocal fans (n = 142), and Chinese distant fans (n = 213). The author recruited local fans and nonlocal fans via Amazon Mechanical Turk. The findings informed that Chinese distant fans exhibited the highest levels of motivation in seven out of the nine motivational categories measured. Furthermore, the study found that geographic locality plays a significant role in predicting motivational differences among casual and moderate fans, though this is not the case for loyal fans.



**Humayun, M. F. (2023). Construction of mediated national identity through sports journalists twitter feed. *Communication & Sport, 11(2)*, 385-401.**

In this study, a researcher from the University of Colorado Boulder explored the intricate relationship between sports, media, and national identity, with a particular focus on how Pakistani and Indian national identities are depicted through journalists' tweets during the 2017 International Cricket Council (ICC) champions trophy final. Utilizing Elias's habitus thesis as a conceptual framework, the study run a textual analysis of 641 tweets from Pakistani and Indian journalists posted during the game. This method offered a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which national identity is constructed and presented on social media within the context of sports journalism. The findings revealed potential national differences in sports journalism practices and emphasized the impact of the chosen media platform on the mediated construction of national identity. Also, the study highlighted the interplay between journalistic styles and practices across both traditional and new media platforms.

**Guo, S., & Xu, Q. (2023). Home nation first, but to what degree?: Nationalism in Chinese central television's broadcasts of the 2018 Winter Olympics. *Communication & Sport, 11(4)*, 770-786.**

In this study, authors from the University of Michigan and Eastern Washington University examined the nuances of nationalism in sports broadcasting. Their research focused on the 2018 Winter Olympics coverage by China Central Television (CCTV) and how the network's narratives framed both home and foreign athletes. Adopting a quantitative approach, over a span of 17 days (February 9–February 25), a comprehensive analysis of 37 hours and 49 minutes of China Central Television (CCTV) Olympic primetime coverage was conducted. The media coverage was sourced from 2018.cctv.com, CCTV's official website dedicated to the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, where all televised competitions were archived. The study

revealed an evident preference for home athletes in CCTV's broadcasts, noting that Chinese competitors received more name mentions despite their relatively lesser medal achievements compared to their foreign counterparts. In fact, home athletes dominated the airtime, securing at least 40% of the top 10 mentions across the three sports under investigation. When analyzing the language used by broadcasters, the study unveiled a clear pattern of attributing Chinese athletes' successes to subjective factors such as concentration, composure, commitment, and intelligence. Conversely, the successes of non-Chinese athletes were more frequently attributed to objective factors like experience.