

## Sport Communications

Gashaw Abeza

### Introduction

The sport management research community has published over 50 sport communication (and related) articles in the field's various journals since the second issue of SMD (March 2022 to Sep 2022). 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, International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship, Journal of Global Sport Management, and others. Particularly, the two communication journals namely, Communication and Sport, and International Journal of Sport Communication have published 28 and 17 research articles respectively over the period of this third issue. The research works covered a total of eight broadly classified but inter-related topic areas. These include 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. The specific topic areas that the field's scholars researched under each theme are listed below:

- *Gender representation in media coverage:* gender representation at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, men and women sports on NBC Tokyo Games coverage, women's soccer viewership experience during the World Cup, masculinities in sport media; race, gender, and sport in advertisements in Japan, gender representation on the Instagram accounts of NCAA athletic departments, gendered body of Turkish bikini fitness athletes on Instagram, performance enhancing drugs (IPED) use and gender on a new women-only online IPED forum, recontextualizing barstool sports and misogyny in online sports media, and gender bias of organization communications.

- *Race and sport media*: race in Polish televised football, race representation on the covers of three popular running magazine, media framing of mamba mentality within the contemporary US racial and gender politics, and basketball as a communicative act of resilience.
- *The profession of sport journalism*: female journalists in the Swiss press, journalists seen through the eyes of athletes, recruiting reporters' perceptions of ethical issues, MLB broadcasts and the fact metrics, being a female sports journalist on Twitter, and "digital" sports journalism.
- *Media coverage of concussion*: media narratives about concussions, and media framing of concussion following the 2018 UEFA Champions League Final.
- *Mega/Major-events and media coverage*: legacy of Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, and the impact of media globalization of English Football and the Kuwaiti experience.
- *Forms of communication in sport*: basketball as a communicative act of resilience, playing through injury and communication, and effects of coach communication on student-athlete learning indicators.
- *Social media use in sport*: athletic directors and social media use by student-athletes, perceptions of FIFA Men's World Cup 2022 host nation Qatar in the Twittersphere, and an analysis of digital advertisements.
- *Social psychology and sport communication*: motivational differences among different type of viewers, predictors of esports gameplay and spectatorship, fulfilling the basic psychological needs of esports fans, the influence of emotions induced by sportscasts, sports media as empathy facilitator, and streamer credibility and their influence on streamer marketing.

### **Advances in sport communications**

As it may be recalled, the first issue of the sport communication section of SMD focused on topics such as: media representation of disability, mental illness, and women in sport; and media coverage and consumption of sport (TV and social media). Studies on these topic areas continued to be published and extended the findings of the previous studies covered since Issue I. The second issue focused on the topics of race and sport media, and forms of communications in sport. As pointed out above, articles on these topic areas continued to be published (over the period of this third issue) and have built on the previous studies under a different research context and focus.

For this digest the topic of social psychology and sport media has been selected. Over the period of March 2022 to Sep 2022, six articles presented their findings related the social psychology aspects of sport communication. In this regard, Stangor, Jhangiani, and Tarry (2022) group social psychology into three principles: social cognition (i.e., thinking and learning about others), social affect (feelings about ourselves and others), and social behavior (interacting with others). The six articles (considered for this digest) covered these three 'principles' in the context of media audiences/consumers domain (the three domains being: audience, content, and media). The six articles on these three research topics have been published in *Communication and Sport* (4 articles) and *International Journal of Sport Communication* (2 articles), representing the work of 17 authors from 9 different universities (namely, Butler University, Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Kent State University, Louisiana State University, Miami University, University of Alabama, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, and University of South Florida).

The six studies under consideration were researched in context of sports such as NBA 2K League consumers, esport consumers in general, and Paralympic and Olympic Games. These studies used a quantitative study approach employing survey method, quasi-experimental method, and a cross-sectional nonexperimental design. The authors used different theories and

conceptual frameworks such as self-determination theory, parasocial interaction (PSI) with the parasocial contact hypothesis (PCH), active-audience (e.g., uses and gratifications, theory of reasoned action) and structure theories.

### **Annotated bibliography**

**Rogers, R., Farquhar, L., & Mummert, J. (2022). Motivational differences among viewers of traditional sports, Esports, and NBA 2K league. *Communication & Sport, 10(2)*, 175-194.**

These three researchers (from Butler University) investigated motivations for consuming the digital version of the traditional basketball game, NBA 2K, content. According to the researchers, while research works have been conducted on motivations for esports participation and consumption, they contend that esports has broadly been treated as a monolith in the research community, which is similar to considering viewers watch the NFL football for the same reasons that viewers watch every other sport (beach volleyball, cricket, jai alai, basketball, etc.). Hence, for the authors, there has been limited research done with regard to the consumption of specific games and titles within esports such as NBA 2K, Rocket League, League of Legends. With that argument, the researchers examined the potential differences between the motivations for broadly viewing esports and motivations for viewing a specific title within esports (NBA 2K). To accomplish the research objective, the authors employed Raney and Bryant's (2009) taxonomy of motivations which are sorted into one of three categories: emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. The author employed a three-condition quasi-experiment, with comparison groups of those who watched the NBA 2K League (condition 1), watched esports but not the NBA 2K League (condition 2), and watched traditional sports but neither esports nor the NBA 2K League (condition 3). The author reported that people consume a specific esports (NBA 2K) for different motivations than esports generally, which suggests the

need for investigating motivations for viewing a specific title within esports games, not esports generally. Having reported their findings, the author argued that future studies should continue to treat games individually or at least continue to examine whether there is a need to treat them individually.

**Tang, T., Kucek, J., & Toepfer, S. (2022). Active within structures: Predictors of esports gameplay and spectatorship. *Communication & Sport*, 10(2), 195-215.**

With the aim of understanding the complexities and intricacies of esports consumption, these three authors from Kent State University examined why people play and watch esports. The authors contend that esports gameplayers are often potential viewers of esports events, and most esports spectators are active gamers with an intention of improving gameplay skills and performance from others game. The authors also argue that most of the existing esports research consider esports consumers as either players or spectators, and have examined esports gameplay and spectatorship in isolation. To accomplish the research objective, guided by active-audience (e.g., uses and gratifications, theory of reasoned action) and structure theories, the author employed an online survey. 526 participants (18 years old or older esports consumers in the United States) successfully completed the survey, who were recruited via several esports-related online message boards and mobile apps, such as Reddit, Discord, and other similar platforms. The author reported that esports gameplay was explained relatively more by structural factors (e.g., availability, access, cost) than by individual factors (e.g., motivations, preferences, fandom, demographics for media use). On the other hand, esports spectatorship was driven significantly more by individual factors.

**Qian, T. Y., Wang, J. J., Zhang, J. J., & Hlland, J. (2022). Fulfilling the basic psychological needs of esports fans: A self-determination theory approach. *Communication & sport*, 10(2), 216-240.**

These four authors from three different universities (Louisiana State University, Miami University, University of Georgia) argue that research examining human motivation should not only examine factors associated with behavioral classifications or be constrained by the content and structure of a particular consumption activity (e.g., U&G theory, Sloan's sport motivation theories). Instead, the authors contend that scholars should investigate how different basic psychological needs are fulfilled, in this manner enhancing behaviors among all potential consumers and across all types of activities. Following this argument, the authors investigated the fulfillment of esports fans' basic psychological needs and pertinent behaviors. Guided by self-determination theory (SDT), which (according to the authors) considers fulfillment of innate psychological needs as the theoretical grounds for human motivation, the study developed seven different hypotheses. To accomplish the research objective, the author employed a cross-sectional nonexperimental design. Using an online survey distributed on Reddit for 10 days, data was collected from a convenience sample of adults (over 18) esports fans who watched esports at least once a month. Findings reported that the SDT is a relevant theory in explaining pertinent information on need satisfaction, motivation, and related consumption behaviors. Specifically, according to the study, relatedness has been reported as the most salient basic psychological need dimension.

**Xu, Q., Kim, H., & Billings, A. C. (2022). Let's Watch Live Streaming: How Streamer Credibility Influences Brand Attitude in Esports Streamer Marketing. *Communication & Sport*, 10(2), 271-290.**

According to these three researchers, from University of Kentucky and University of Alabama, unlike social media influencers who post pre-made content, esports streamers engage in real-time video chat with their followers while streaming their gameplay, which has a potential for an enhanced engagement, intimacy, and trustworthiness among the players and their follows. This marketing opportunity attracted a number of sponsors such as Adidas, Red Bull, Uber Eats, etc., and is becoming popular. Despite the fact that, the authors argue, the way in which esports streamers influence audience attitudes toward endorsed brands requires further exploration. Hence, the authors studied if and how perceived esports streamer credibility influences the audience's attitude toward the brand endorsed by the streamer. To help them accomplish their research objective, the authors introduced five hypotheses, employed a survey method with a participation of 277 US adults (recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk) and run a structural equation modeling analysis. Findings reported a significant and positive relationship between streamer credibility and brand attitude, while identifying parasocial relationships and streamer loyalty as two factors mediating the impact of streamer credibility on brand attitude.

**Mutz, M., & Gerke, M. (2022). Media Presentations of Olympic Victories and Nation-Related Identification Among Viewers: The Influence of Emotions Induced by Sportscasts. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 15(2), 117-126.**

These researchers, from Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, studied the framing effects of live sports broadcasts on viewer's attachment to the nation, their levels of patriotic pride, nationalism as well as nation-related values. As the author argue, emotions provoked by sportscasts are essential in activating the impact of a sportscast on viewers' national pride and national identifications. In their experimental study, the authors used sportscasts of German gold medal wins at the 2016 and 2018 Olympic Games. They investigated the causal effect that

emotions induced by the reporter's commentary (independent variable) have on national identifications and nation-related values (dependent variables). The study findings showed that the broadcasting styles influence viewers' emotions, attitudes, and collective identifications beyond the effects of the sporting competition itself. Particularly, findings showed that those encounter partisan commentary experienced heightened emotions; identified more strongly with their nation; exhibited more patriotism and nationalism; and ascribed positive values (e.g., achievement, diligence) more strongly to their home country than did viewers in the control group.

**Bissell, K., Billings, A. C., & Park, B. (2022). Sports Media as Empathy Facilitator: The Contrasting Influence of Paralympic and Olympic Content. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 1(aop), 1-10.**

These three researchers, from University of Alabama and University of South Florida, argue that there is a lack of study that integrated the characteristics that are fairly permanent (trait empathy) to characteristics that are situation and fluid (state empathy) based on the level and nature of engagement with mediated content (presence). Based this argument, the authors attempted to explore relationships between media exposure and personal experience with a attitudes toward disability (DIS). Specifically, the study examined the relationships between state empathy, attitudes toward DIS, and stigma following exposure to two types of Olympic Game coverages, namely Paralympic and Olympic. Guided by parasocial interaction (PSI) with the parasocial contact hypothesis (PCH), an online experiment was conducted with 411 participants using Amazon Mechanical Turk. As the authors wrote, findings highlighted that there were two ways to induce empathy: (a) if one already had a preexisting experience with DIS or (b) if one consumed media exposing them to an adapted athlete in Paralympic competition. Thus, the primacy of relational contact is emphasized, yet with media exposure



seemingly being capable of a worthy “back-up” for empathy facilitation for those who felt more detached from the experience of having a DIS.

### **References**

Stangor, C., Jhangiani, R., & Tarry, H. (2022). Principles of Social Psychology-1st International H5P Edition.