

## **Comparative Ranking of the Electronic and Print Mass Media in Dissemination of Sports Information in Kenya**

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### ***Abstract***

*The mass media have a fundamental role to play in the development of Sports. Their contribution towards uplifting performance and popularizing sports is particularly critical in the developing countries where sports programmes tend to receive minimal attention and resource allocation. The mass media are important tools for marketing, publicizing and popularizing sports. Their specific roles include bringing talent into the limelight, giving recognition/appreciation to outstanding sports personalities and objectively pointing out problematic and weak areas in sports. However, research has revealed cases of unbalanced reporting of sports information by the mass media. There have also been numerous allegations of the mass media's sensational reporting of sports events that fuels and catalyzes wrangling in sports organizations. This study therefore, focused on comparing the rating of the electronic and print media in the dissemination of information on sports in Kenya from the perceptions of the Public Sports Officers, Officials of Sports Federations and University Students enrolled in sports-related courses in Kenya. The study found some variations in the ranking of the two types of media in the way they carried out their roles in handling sports issues. It is recommended that the mass media should be more balanced and proactive in dealing with matters of sports. Regular surveys by the mass media to determine the public's perception of their services is also recommended.*

**Key Words:** Mass Media, Sports

### ***Introduction***

The mass media have a fundamental role to play in promotion and popularization of sports. It is through the mass media that sports can be marketed and given wider publicity. The primary roles of the media can be summarized to include: dissemination of information on sports to the public, giving coverage for sports events and educating people on matters of sports. Arising from discharging these fundamental roles, the media, in turn, can be relied upon to develop sports by:

- i. Bringing talent into the limelight
- ii. Giving recognition to outstanding sports personalities who can serve as role-models to the young athletes
- iii. Highlighting problematic and weak areas in sports programmes so that efforts can be directed towards addressing them.
- iv. Attracting corporate sponsorship in sports through positive reporting on sports issues.

In spite of the contributions that the mass media have continued to make in the realm of sports, there have been reported cases of unbalanced reporting on matters of sports by the mass media. A study by Munayi (2003) reported more coverage of men's sports activities than the women's in the mass media in Kenya. There have also been allegations against the mass media's sensational reporting of sports events that tend to fuel and catalyze disharmony in sports organizations (Beck and Bosshart, 2003). It is against this background that this study was undertaken to compare the ranking of the electronic and print media in the dissemination of sports information in Kenya.

### ***Methodology***

Exploratory survey research design was used in this study. Subjects who are knowledgeable on matters of sports and accessible to media information were identified and randomly selected to provide the required data.

These included 22 officials of various national sports federations, 19 sports officers from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 8 university lecturers who teach sports-related degree courses and 44 students enrolled in the sports-related degree courses. A questionnaire that was constructed by the researchers on the basis of the identified main roles of the mass media in sports was used to collect data. The respondents were asked to compare the electronic and print media in the way they relayed sports information by ranking them. The electronic media in this case included the radio and television, while print media included the newspapers which have wider readership in Kenya, that is, the Daily Nation newspaper and the Standard.

**Findings and Discussions**

The results on the rankings of the print and electronic media by the respondents on extent of their coverage and publicity, as well as educating the public on matters of sports are as shown in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Ranking of Print and Electronic Media on Sports Coverage, Publicity and Education**

Activity	Media	Frequency on Ranking	
		Rank 1	Rank 2
Coverage of Sports Events	Print	47 (53%)	42 (47%)
	Electronic	42 (45%)	51 (55%)
Publicity Sports	Print	39 (43%)	52 (57%)
	Electronic	51 (55%)	41 (45%)
Education on sports	Print	52 (59%)	36 (41%)
	Electronic	37 (41%)	54 (59%)

The results presented in table 1 above show that higher proportion of the respondents, 47 (53%) ranked the print media in the first position, while the electronic media received ranking in the second position by majority of the respondents, 51 (55%) in terms of their extent of coverage of sports events. Whereas majority of respondents, 52 (57%) ranked the print media in the second position in their extent of providing publicity to sports, another higher proportion of 51 (55%) also ranked the electronic media in the first position on this role. This results show agreement in the respondents’ ranking of the two media; electronic media played a bigger role in publicity of sports than the print media.

The frequency in the ranking of the two types of media on their effectiveness in educating people on matters of sports revealed that majority of the respondents, 52 (59%) ranked the print media first, and almost a similar proportion of them, 54 (59%) ranked the electronic media second on this role. Sowell (2008) puts emphasis on the educational responsibility of the mass media. The media is expected to take the lead in educating people on the importance of sports and exercise, nutrition and sports, training practices among others. The findings on the ranking of the two types of media on the roles of giving recognition to outstanding sports personnel, identifying and exposing sports talent and on balanced reporting of the both men’s and women’s sports activities are shown in table 2.

**Table 2. Frequency on Ranking of Print and Electronic Media on Recognition of Outstanding Sports Personnel, Identifying and Exposing of Sports Talent and Extent of Balanced Reporting of Men’s and Women’s Sports Activities.**

Activity	Media	Frequency on Ranking	
		Rank 1	Rank 2
Recognition of Outstanding Sports Personnel	Print	48 (53%)	42 (47%)
	Electronic	45 (45%)	46 (51%)
Identifying and Exposing Sports Talent	Print	43 (48%)	46 (52%)
	Electronic	47 (51%)	45 (49%)
Education on sports	Print	53 (58%)	37 (42%)
	Electronic	36 (40%)	54 (60%)

The frequency count on ranking of the two media on their role of giving recognition to outstanding sports personnel places the print media in position one and electronic media in second, with majority ranking frequencies of 48 (53%) and 46(51%) respectively.

Recognition of personnel who excel in sports is an important motivating factor that can lead to improved performance. Frequency in ranking on the extent to which the mass media assisted in exposing sports talent showed that majority of the respondents, 47 (51%) and 46 (52%) placed the electronic media in the first and the print media in the second positions respectively. It is only through reporting and highlighting personalities who have demonstrated the potential of excelling in various sports activities that they can be targeted for talent development. As the media personnel undertake coverage of sports competitions at various levels, it is possible for them to come across talented youth who need to be exposed to the necessary technical support.

The print media was rated in the highest position, while the electronic media was ranked in the second by proportions of 53 (58%) respondents in terms of extent of balancing the reporting of both men's and women's sports events. This finding varies from the one reported by Munayi (2003). This may be the case due to difference in time and methodology used in this study and one by Munayi (2003). Whereas the data for this study was collected using a questionnaire, the study by Munayi (2003) used observation techniques.

### ***Summary of the Findings***

- i. The print media ranks higher than electronic media in terms of coverage, education, recognition of outstanding sports personnel and balanced reporting of both men and women's sports activities.
- ii. The electronic media is comparatively more effective than the print media with regard to publicity of sports events and identification and exposure of sports talent.

From the findings of this study, it is recommended that the print and electronic media need to carry out regular surveys to determine the extent of satisfaction of sports personnel with their services. The various sports organizations should also continuously cultivate good and effective working relationships with mass media for the popularization and development of their sports programmes.

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