



Female empowerment in sport, analysis of its narrative and treatment in the media

Empoderamiento femenino en el deporte, análisis de su narrativa y tratamiento en los medios de comunicación

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ABSTRACT

This article focused on the media's treatment of sports news and the presence of women in these narratives. Undoubtedly, women struggle to resignify changing stereotypes for new expressions that favor decision making, equal treatment both in real life and in the media. In this way, the empowerment of her role arises, a trend that makes her promote herself as a media protagonist, acquiring visibility.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo se centró en el tratamiento que hacen los medios de comunicación a las noticias deportivas y la presencia de la mujer en esas narrativas. Sin duda, la mujer lucha por resignificar cambiando estereotipos por nuevas expresiones que favorezcan la toma de decisiones, el trato igualitario tanto en la vida real como en los medios de comunicación. De esta manera surge el empoderamiento de su rol, una tendencia que la hace promoverse como protagonista mediática, adquiriendo visibilidad.

Keywords / Palabras clave

women's empowerment, media, sports journalism, journalists, inclusion.

empoderamiento femenino, medios de comunicación, periodismo deportivo, periodistas, inclusión.

Introduction

The Royal Academy of Language defines female empowerment as: "Action and effect of empowering" (making a disadvantaged person powerful), but in recent decades this word has become part of the feminist vocabulary in projects carried out to promote gender equality. Its letter of introduction was at the United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) with the aim of increasing women's participation in decision-making processes and access to power.

In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UN includes a space dedicated to women's empowerment in the media, where it calls for: "increasing women's access to and participation in the expression of their ideas and decision-making in and through the media, as well as in new communication technologies" (UN, United Nations 1995).

Asunción Bernández Rodal (Rodal, 2015) states that women in the media honor perceptions, values and social models that for years dominated a patriarchal society that today struggles against machismo to seek equal treatment in life and the media. Currently, female empowerment has an important place in communication, and is part of a feminist trend that projects images of women in roles that previously only involved men, this when referring to fiction; if the context is informative women in the past were prevented from talking

about issues related to sports, politics and economics (González, 2018). But all this is part of an evolution.

The audiovisual media are promoters of culture and women's issues in the mass-media have become mediatic as women become more involved in the labor and professional fields. According to Rosa Franquet (Franquet, 1990), in her book "La mujer y la relación con los medios", there are fundamental epochs of feminism in audiovisual formats. The establishment of the woman - housewife model as an image was in the 1950s, after the First and Second World Wars, women returned to their homes to take care of their families and their figure was projected as an agent of consumption of real estate and household appliances, because they were only seen in the role of mother and wife, that is where the boom of contents such as: women's magazines, fotonovelas, radio soap operas, etc. began. The radical change of content is reflected in the following decade, in the 60's, with the feminist movement, women sought and seek to break stereotypes, a more inclusive television is established with new roles for women. A new way of seeing, perceiving the female gender; to later continue with the ongoing debate on gender roles until today.

In Ecuador, discrimination and equality issues enjoy the acceptance of civil society and are part of the main focus in public debates, this has allowed the creation of policies with a gender approach that are being reproduced and socialized (CORDICOM, 2017), even so stereotypes and gender roles are still part of different social situations.

The challenge for the media industry is to contribute to the formation of a communication free of prejudice and without discrimination, inclusive and intercultural, as an indispensable tool for a more democratic, plural and inclusive communication that contributes to citizen empowerment for the enforceability of rights (Social, 2014). Therefore, true empowerment begins by changing the gender roles that exist in society and using the media to do so, putting an end to sexism and machismo by creating balanced content.

This problem is evident in the sports formats broadcast, due to the fact that sports have become masculinized, leaving women without a place or contribution. According to the 2010 report of Participación Ciudadana (Ciudadana, 2010) reveals that of the total number of reporters 61.35% are men and that they mainly deal with political, economic, judicial and sports topics; 38.65% are women who are in

charge of social topics, general interest, entertainment, culture and show business.

In a country like Ecuador, where out of 17 million inhabitants 50% are women, according to INEC data, and 56% of higher education quotas are held by women and in the social communication career they occupy 55%, but that only 36% work in the media says a lot about the lack of empowerment of women in this field (Registro Único de Medios, 2018). Developing a plan to position and visualize the female gender in the world of sports, which has been androcentric since its origins, is even more complicated. The lack of inclusion is at a general level, but in Latin America the gap is widening. During the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, the figures are surprising: only 22% of the news with identified authorship about the sporting events in the Latin American media was written and/or reported exclusively by women and female journalists were assigned, more than men, the coverage of non-sporting topics. (IOC, 2016).

Underlying this fact is the need to create an empowerment that breaks myths that pigeonhole women in domestic, sexual, sentimental or training roles. This goes hand in hand with discarding paradigms and making good use of media and technologies to give prominence to women in spaces that provide quality content and set a precedent in the country's sports media.

The development of new platforms and media is an option for innovative, controversial, feminist and unique topics. The emergence of the internet and streaming technology, try to satisfy the desires of an individual, they stick to one's preferences and not the masses; so relates in his essay Jeff Harvis (Harvis, 2015), who agrees that mass media are in decline and states that everything is directed to personalized content and that is why services like Netflix, Hulu, Youtube, etc. monopolize the attention of those who decide what they want to see.

Sports programs are part of the long list of unique formats, which is why paid television has prioritized this topic and launched channels aimed at the sports-loving public. The main printed and digital newspapers include spaces on front pages and targeted sections, but as a social rule, their public is male. Little prominence for female journalists and sportswomen, because the few lines of the tabloids or the time in front of the camera was to use them as a visual accessory of the target (woman - object).

Nowadays, paradigms are being broken little by little and the sports field already has female protagonists, or rather it has always had them but now they demand to be taken into account. This problem is not a matter of a single country, it is part of the sexism at Latin American level, for example during the Olympic Games of Rio de Janeiro 2020 (Ecuador participated with 39% of female athletes), the first Hispanic gender observatory was created: equality during the Olympics, women still have lower participation in athlete delegations in most countries around the world, including in Latin America. And while there have been significant advances in recent decades, even with gender parity in some nations, this does not guarantee that their

achievements are adequately visible and valued, that they are not stereotyped by gender, perceived as desirable objects with attention on their clothing, devalued by the press, by organizers and by advertising (Observatorio de Género J.J.O.O., 2016.)

The lack of women in the media is also notable, in the 6 open television channels, only in two programs women are part of the host staff; in radio there are more women, an average of one journalist per program; the problem is that the intervention they have in the informative debates is minimal. Sometimes they intervene to read mentions, social networks or present color notes, excluding them from the role of journalism. Managers hire women based on their physique and not on their capabilities; this is also a sexist way of treating information. In paid television, women have more participation, but it is still impossible to find a woman leading the staff.

Equality in the transmission of news determines the progress of women's sports. Athletes such as Marina Pérez, Olympic shooter, affirms that the lack of evidence of their achievements in the media is the cause of the failure of many sportswomen, because sponsors are not interested in investing in their careers and preparation. Discrimination against women in the media is evident: out of 20 news items broadcast in a sports program, only 1 or at most 2 refer to women and their achievements. The approach to the problem seeks to solve the equitable treatment of news about women athletes, the incursion of women journalists in a relevant way, to present attractive content that attracts the attention of different audiences.

Materials and Methods

This research uses a qualitative methodology focused on a technique that combines textual and documentary analysis of the discourse in order to identify the argumentative frameworks and through them the ideologies and positions of the media in published editorials and radio and television news, in response to the prominence of women in recent sporting events such as: Women's Super Soccer League, Pan American Games, Women's Libertadores Cup, among others. The sample is obtained from the editorials published in the sports sections of the newspapers El Universo and El Comercio.

After a first review, we selected those referring to women and compared them with those referring to men. We performed the same procedure with the analysis of the television news of the following media: Ecuavisa, Directv and Teleamazonas. We took the radio report from Radio Diblu, the sports radio with the largest audience in the city of Guayaquil. Once the articles were determined, the matrices were established, which will be applied in each media and will allow us to analyze in a methodical and structured way the discourse and its context.

Results

The publications in the print media analyzed, as indicated above, were selected based on the information on the research topic, the prominence of women athletes in the media. This methodological decision was consistent with the stereotypes that still exist in the media. It can be identified that there is still a majority in terms of the prominence of male athletes in sports journalism, there are even editions in which no news about athletes are included. El Comercio, although it does not reach equity, is more inclusive than Diario El Universo.

Table 1. Record of news about female athletes in *El Universo* newspaper.

<i>El Universo Newspaper</i> <i>The Marker Section</i>			
	<i>News Women</i>	<i>News Men</i>	<i>Mixed news</i>
<i>Date 1</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>
<i>Date 2</i>			
<i>Date 3</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>
<i>Date 4</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>
<i>Date 5</i>			<i>0</i>
<i>Total</i>		<i>92</i>	

Table 2. Register of news on female athletes in *El Comercio* newspaper

<i>El Comercio Newspaper</i> <i>Sports Section</i>			
	<i>News Women</i>	<i>News Men</i>	<i>Mixed news</i>
<i>Date 1</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>
<i>Date 2</i>			
<i>Date 3</i>			<i>0</i>
<i>Date 4</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>
<i>Date 5</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>Total</i>			<i>5</i>

Table 3. Newspaper *El Universo* and *El Comercio* news stories

STORY FRAMEWORK NEWS		
	THE UNIVERSE	THE COMMERCE
Differences	Uses very biased titles such as "Girls get ready to roll the ball."	They focus more on sporting achievements

	More focus on women's soccer issues	Women in different sports
Convergences	Inconsistencies in the number of sports news items dedicated to women	

Despite being a week with a lot of events involving women in sports, the media give it minimal importance, preferring to address irrelevant international issues, instead of disseminating the achievements and preparation of Ecuadorian athletes.

Table 4. *Record of news of female athletes on Radio and TV*

Radio and Television				
Topics	Radio Dibu	Ecuavis a	DirecTv	Teleamazonas
Women's Super League Soccer			5	
South American Under 19	1	0	1	
Libertadores Cup		1	1	1
Olympic Year Female athletes	0	1	0	
World Athletics Championships	1			1
Total				

In addition to the analysis of the selected media, interviews were conducted with high-performance athletes in the country, who pointed out the following as the most important points regarding the presence of female athletes in the media and the media coverage of their events: "There is no media coverage". "There is still perceived the existence of machismo when talking about female athletes", "There is no interest of people in knowing more about them", and that from their perspective "there is total inequality in the media in relation to the coverage of journalistic articles".

The need to propose a social campaign to empower women in sports and break stereotypes has a great opportunity in the country, due to

the fact that the movement for gender equality is latent in society and, above all, that a campaign to raise awareness of machismo and sexism in sports has not been carried out before in Ecuador. In Spain, Argentina and Brazil they have been carried out with great success, achieving as a result the creation of gender observatories that promote inclusive language in the media and the guidelines of major brands linked to sports.

According to the analysis, out of 20 news items in the media, only 3 correspond to women and sometimes the focus of the news is diverted with topics related to their role as mothers, sentimental situation or refer to their physical attributes. For this reason, the campaign should start from an analysis of various national and international instruments of Human Rights and the UN, such as the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which delimits a space aimed at the importance of creating spaces directed and designed for women with a focus on the equity of the information transmitted.

The social campaign should seek to raise awareness about machismo and sexism in the media, thus overthrowing the stereotypes created about women and sport, to end the erroneous "tradition" of gender roles, and then make a leap of innovation with a digital observatory and agency to disseminate in the media the empowerment of Ecuadorian sportswomen. The concept of the campaign is to end the silence that exists in the media when it comes to women athletes.

Similarly, the study should analyze two premises to be taken into consideration for the phenomenon of sexism in the media: "making women visible" and "ending stereotypes". Therefore, from the State policies, with emphasis on Article 61 of the Organic Law of Communication where it states and "discriminatory content shall be understood as any message that is disseminated by any means of social communication that makes distinction, restriction, exclusion or preference based on reasons of nationality, ethnicity, place of birth, age, sex, gender identity (...), from the Secretary of Sports generate synergies towards the construction of a campaign aimed at addressing, preventing and eradicating sexism, machismo and androcentric communication in media. (National Assembly, 2019)

Conclusions

More than 20 years ago, the United Nations recognized the role of the media in changing gender stereotypes that influence the way society thinks and acts. Among these statements, they even stated that women and the media should be one of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, and urged, at a global level, that the media should intensify its support for women's empowerment. (UN Women, 2021)

In the analysis of news treatment in the media and interviews with high-performance athletes, the results showed that Ecuador still does not have equal gender coverage in sports news. However, it is necessary for audiences to know more about the achievements and presence of female athletes in the different disciplines practiced in the country.

Ecuador is a country that has a large percentage of women athletes, who are often anonymous or very little known to the public, so there is a need for empowerment in this area. Developing communication strategies will help to publicize the achievements of women and to have more space in sports journalism, with important news and handling inclusive content and language that promotes egalitarian sport.

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