

Exploring Youth Engagement with Sports News: A Focus Group Study

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Abstract

Media is considered the mirror of society. It presents all information, news, and updates about contemporary issues. Sports news has always been an important component of daily news. Sports is essential for all age groups. However, in youth age sports have significant importance. News and Information shapes the opinions, perceptions, and also behaviours. The current study aimed to explore the youth engagement with sports news. Through Focus group discussion, the study aimed to explore the primary media sources among youth for Sports news, youths' perception about media coverage of sports, and their pattern of consuming sports news and information. As reflected through discussion, the study found that youth actively engage in sports news through mass media as well as social media platforms and mainly follow for updates and highlights of sports events. Majority of the respondents opined that media gives good coverage to sports but they also opined that most of the coverage is focused only on Cricket. However, social media platforms provide them wide range and accessibility to follow their preferred sports interests through varied platforms dedicated to sports.

Keywords: Sports News, Social Media, Youth, News Consumption.

Introduction

Sports have always been an important part of our lives as well as in news. Earlier, when there were only mass media platforms, people have limited options, the current day technological advancements present a plethora of digital resources. In mass media, sports are covered through news, editorials, articles, and some newspapers or news channels gives detailed pages or programs on sports news. Major sports events automatically get the major coverage in all media platforms. Along with this, the social media has its own way of

presenting and engaging users with sports news and information. Social media pages, influencers, news portals etc. present a wide variety for users having specific interest in sports. The current study aimed to explore the sports news consumption among youth. It will aim to answer how do youth accesses and engages with sports news, their preferences, and news consumption patterns.

Literature Review

Abida Naseer and Saeed Javed (2021) in research study titled Role of Media in The Promotion of Female Sports Participation in Pakistan examined the role of media in promoting female participation in sports in Pakistan. The survey results of 300 surveyed respondents showed that there is significant influence of mass media and marketing on participation of female sports persons at University levels.

Pilar et.al. (2019) conducted systematic review of international publications in Web of Science and Scopus in between 2007 to 2018 to study the effects and influence of sports contents on the audience. Thorough analysis of select studies highlights that Football was among the most researched sport. Sport media have positive influence on motivation to make lifestyle changes, sport media follows a specific model of information treatment and representation that impacts the social values.

Aafid Gulam (2016) in review paper titled Role of mass media in Sports communication discussed the role of each medium such as Radio, Television, Internet, and other mass media platforms.

Kim et. al. (2016) investigated Uses and gratification of young people usage of social media for sports. Out of 468 online surveyed respondents, 391 valid respondents' responses were analysed. The survey results showed that entertainment, social interaction, information seeking, and surveillance are the major motivations of youth for using social media for college athletics.

Research Methodology

The current study employed focus group discussion to know the sports news consumption pattern among youth. A total of 8 students from different disciplines (Journalism and Mass Communication, History, English, Psychology, B.Tech., Physical Education) studying in Central University of Haryana were randomly selected. Randomly, the respondents resulted in equal proportion of male and female respondents. Participants were aged in between 20 to 25 years. An in-depth focus group discussion on some structured points was conducted. All the eight participants were coded as A to G for data analysis and discussion. The focus group discussion was mainly on following points as per research objectives:

- Primary Media Sources
- Sports Interests: Popular Sports and Preferences
- Primary Media Sources for Sports News
- Preferred Platforms for Accessing Sports News
- Types of Content Consumed: Live Broadcasts, Highlights, and Specific Sports (Major Concerns)
- Frequency and Timing of Sports News Consumption
- Social media and Influencers in Sports News Consumption
- Perceptions of Media Coverage of Sports
- Engagement with Sports News: Sharing, Commenting, and Interaction
- Additional Feedback or Remarks on Sports News Consumption

The major outcomes of focus group discussion have been discussed in the next section.

Discussion

The focus group discussion resulted in a detailed discussion among respondents and presented a detailed overview of sports news consumption among youth. Respondent A responded that her primary media resources are Newspaper, magazine, news channel. Her sports interests are mainly in sports like Kabaddi, IPL, and Badminton. For sports news and information, she prefers star sports (TV news channel), Jio cinema, Dainik Bhaskar (sports section). Along with these she accesses sports news on platforms such as tv channel, social media, print media, apps like Hotstar and Disney. Regarding a discussion point about types of contents consumed she replied that she mostly prefers sports highlights and specific sports events only. Discussing about frequency and timing of sports news consumption she usually checks sports news once or twice daily in morning while reading newspaper and in afternoon while scrolling social media sites. On social media platforms she mainly reads only headlines. She responded that Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook provide live updates and influencer, sports journalist, match reviews and analysis make sports news more engaging. She herself mostly engage while sharing sports news on WhatsApp, sometime liking videos and sharing through YouTube etc. Regarding perception of media coverage of sports news, she opined that coverage of sports in India is on popular games like cricket, while other games get less attention. She said that media is playing positive role in popularizing sports which promotes sports culture in country. In a concluding remark she mentioned that digital journalism made sports news more engaging, as it allows to follow favourite player directly through social media, news consumption become much easier, and provides lots of medium to get sports news.

Another respondent, coded as B mentioned primary media source as Star Sports, and showed special interest in Cricket only. He said that he follows Cric Buzz for sports news and updates. Similar to Respondent A, B also mentioned that he follows social media mainly for highlights, and agreed that social media and influencer make sports news consumption more engaging. He agreed that he shares sports updates on social media sites as status and shares any game win at various platforms. And in response to frequency of accessing sports news mentioned that he checks occasionally. B opined that in Indian media there is more than enough endorsements of players and social media sometimes trolls the players too much in case of any loss that's wrong.

Respondent C mentioned his primary media source are websites like ESPN, newspaper, Google news etc. Loves cricket and football. and cricket being favourite specially IPL. He mostly relies on YouTube and Star Sports for sports news and prefers watching live broadcast, Or sometimes main news only. Checks sports news while reading newspaper, and mainly search on Internet about cricket updates. Regarding social media engagement, he responded that doesn't interact or comment much but likes the posts that he agrees with. He opined that sometimes media coverage is with biasness but all over satisfied. About engagement in sports news, he mentioned that he likes and shares when favourite team wins. He suggested that social media updates should be more verified.

According to respondent D primary media sources are Websites (Cric buzz), -Google feed, newspaper, etc., main sports interest Cricket, accesses sports news mainly through Websites, likes to watch IPL and highlights. Usually spends 2 to 5 minutes, in the frequency of every 4 to 5 hours and follow influencers for updates. About media coverage perception, he replied positively. He mentioned that he usually keeps on sharing sports news and updates among friends and comments as well. Overall, he opined that Sports is a good activity for the betterment of health and mind, so sometimes the connection between the news with us inspires us to be indulged physically.

Respondents E, said that her primary media sources are Instagram, news channels and she likes Cricket, badminton and basketball. For sports news accesses Star sports, Disney Hotstar, Television, and OTT platforms etc. She mostly prefers specific sports or highlights. And frequency of checking on sports news is once in a day which is in the evening while scrolling Instagram or reading newspapers and duration is 20 mins as only read the main headlines to just get the update of current matches going on. She believed that social media gives real time -updates and fan engaging moments transformed it and made it more interesting, immediate and personalized. And also, influencers like sports journalist and analysts also tried their best to collect every minor detail of the game and

spread that in a right way with the audience. She opined that mostly cricket is the sport which is generally covered but as an audience would also love to watch other sports including badminton, basketball, volleyball, football etc. According to her, media is playing a positive role, it also helps to improve knowledge about sports and for many kids/adults those who loves sports but can't afford booking tickets and watch live, for them these social media sites and mass media platforms are very influential yet best. She mostly engages while sharing the YouTube links of matches with her loved once in WhatsApp, Instagram etc.

Respondent F mentioned her primary media sources are Google News, Instagram and sports interest are Cricket. For sports news sources are Star sports, Google News, Instagram and also accesses sports news on Star sports. She Prefer to watch live broadcast of events. Frequency of checking news depends on mood. According to her social media gives news and updates in simple and attractive way so she follows more on social media. Media coverage in cricket significantly influences public perception by shaping narratives around players, teams, and events, thereby impacting fan engagement, player reputation, and the sport's overall popularity. She mostly shares sports info on social media. She also said that biased reporting harms the truthfulness of news. This shows why balanced and fact-based journalism is important. It helps keep trust and improves the experience for readers and viewers.

According to Respondent G, she primarily uses newspaper, TV, social media for news and updates. Her favourite sports are Cricket, football, UFC, and chess. She mainly get sports news through DD sports, Dainik Bhasker and sometimes also access on OTT and TV. Prefers to watch live broadcasts. Checks news updates 3 to 4 times a day. She opined that social media plays vital role but a lot of misconceptions is also rising after social media. Media plays an important and positive role also in covering sports news. There was a time when people used to watch only cricket but now people also give importance to other sports also. We all know that digital news era plays an important role but we shouldn't forget rising of consumption of news by social media may lead to increase misinformation also.

As per respondent H, his primary media sources are Newspaper, Instagram pages, news channel, and sports interest include cricket, IPL, football. Likes to get sports news from star sports (news channel), Jio cinema, Sports YouTube channels, tv channel, social media, print media, apps like Hotstar and Disney. He said he mostly prefer highlights and usually check sports news 1-2 times a day. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook provide live updates and influencer like sports journalist, sports reviews

and analysis make the news more engaging. He believed that coverage of sports in India is mainly focused on cricket and sports gets less attention. He said he usually shares sports news on whatsapp, likes videos and shares on various social media sites. He believed that digital journalism has made sports news more engaging and one can keep connected with favourite sports and the sportsperson through social media.

Conclusion

The focus group discussion provided valuable insights into sports news consumption among youth, revealing diverse preferences in media sources, content types, engagement habits, and perceptions of sports journalism. Traditional media such as newspapers, television channels, and magazines remain relevant, but digital platforms, including social media and OTT services, have become dominant sources for accessing sports news among youth. Respondents frequently mentioned platforms like Star Sports, Cric Buzz, YouTube, Instagram, and Google News as primary sources of sports updates.

A key finding is the preference for highlights and specific event coverage rather than in-depth reporting, with most participants consuming sports news at least once daily, often while scrolling social media or reading newspapers. Social media plays a dual role—enhancing accessibility and engagement while also contributing to misinformation and biased coverage. Influencers, sports journalists, and real-time updates have made sports news more interactive and personalized, allowing audiences to follow their favourite teams and athletes closely.

Respondents also expressed concerns about media bias, particularly the overwhelming focus on cricket at the expense of other sports. While some viewed the increased coverage as a positive influence in promoting sports culture, others highlighted the need for balanced reporting and verified information.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital journalism has transformed sports news consumption among youth, making it more engaging and accessible. However, media platforms must ensure credibility and diversify their coverage to cater to a broader spectrum of sports enthusiasts.

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