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Marginalization of Women in the Sports Media Industry: A Sociological Analysis of Representation, Power and Structural Inequality

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Abstract

The sports media industry occupies a powerful position in contemporary society because it does not merely report sporting events; it determines which athletes, sports, performances and narratives receive visibility, legitimacy and commercial value. Despite the substantial expansion of women's participation in competitive sports, women continue to experience marginalization within sports media as athletes, journalists, commentators, editors, producers, photographers, presenters and decision-makers. This paper examines the marginalization of women in the sports media industry from a sociological perspective, focusing on unequal representation, gender stereotyping, sexualization and objectification, occupational segregation, organizational cultures, unequal access to leadership, intersectional exclusion and the commercial logic of media institutions.

The paper adopts a qualitative, conceptual and analytical methodology based on a review of scholarly literature, institutional reports and existing empirical studies. Evidence indicates that the problem is multidimensional. Women athletes receive substantially less media attention than men, while women working within sports journalism continue to encounter male-dominated organizational cultures, discrimination, harassment and exclusion. UNESCO has reported that only about 4% of sports media content is devoted to women's sport and only 12% of sports news is presented by women. Longitudinal research similarly demonstrates the persistence of a large quantitative imbalance in televised and digital sports coverage. Recent scholarship also suggests that marginalization cannot be understood through gender alone: race, sexuality, class, nationality and gender expression interact to shape media visibility.

The paper argues that sports media constitute an important mechanism through which patriarchal relations are reproduced but can also become an instrument of gender transformation. Achieving substantive equality requires changes in newsroom structures, editorial priorities, recruitment,

leadership, media ownership, remuneration, safety, representation, algorithmic practices and commercial investment. The paper concludes that women must not merely be added to existing sports-media structures; the institutional culture and definition of sporting value itself must be transformed.

Keywords: Women, Sports Media, Gender Inequality, Marginalization, Sports Journalism, Representation, Patriarchy, Intersectionality, Media, Sociology of Sport

1. Introduction

Sport is one of the most influential social institutions of contemporary society. It is simultaneously an arena of physical performance, identity formation, entertainment, economic activity, nationalism, popular culture and socialization. Modern sport is inseparable from the mass media. Newspapers, television, radio, digital platforms, streaming services, social media and sports websites determine the visibility of sporting events and athletes. Consequently, media representation is not a neutral process. What the media select, emphasize, ignore or frame contributes to the construction of social reality.

Women's participation in sport has increased substantially during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Women now participate at elite levels in athletics, football, cricket, basketball, tennis, wrestling, boxing, weightlifting, hockey, shooting and numerous other disciplines. Nevertheless, increased participation has not automatically produced equality in sports media.

UNESCO has highlighted the continuing disparity: approximately 4% of sports media content is dedicated to women's sport, while only around 12% of sports news is presented by women. UNESCO has also identified stereotypical media practices involving women's physical appearance, family status and the tendency to attribute women's achievements to male coaches or trainers.

This disparity illustrates an important sociological paradox: women may achieve greater participation in sport without acquiring proportional symbolic power within the institutions that define sporting importance.

The marginalization of women in sports media therefore operates at two interconnected levels. First, women athletes and women's sports are marginalized as objects of media representation. Second, women as media professionals are marginalized as producers of sporting narratives. The first concerns the visibility of women in sport; the second concerns women's power to determine visibility.

Recent scholarship reinforces this argument. A 2025 systematic scoping review of 29 empirical studies covering research from 2003–2023 found that sports journalism remains male dominated despite the growing presence of women in the profession. The review identified gendered working conditions, discrimination, harassment and exclusion as recurring themes.

The present paper therefore conceptualizes marginalization not simply as a shortage of media coverage but as a structural process through which women's sporting achievements, professional voices and institutional authority are systematically devalued.

2. Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of this paper are:

- To examine the nature and dimensions of women's marginalization in the sports media industry.
- To analyse the unequal representation of women's sports in print, broadcast and digital media.
- To examine gender stereotypes, sexualization and objectification in sports reporting.
- To analyse women's experiences as sports journalists, presenters, commentators, editors and media professionals.
- To understand the role of patriarchal organizational structures in reproducing gender inequality.
- To examine the issue through feminist, sociological and intersectional perspectives.
- To analyse the relationship between media visibility, commercial value and sporting success.
- To identify the emerging opportunities and challenges created by digital and social media.
- To suggest institutional and policy measures for achieving gender equality in sports media.

3. Research Questions

The paper addresses the following research questions:

- Why does women's increased participation in sport not translate into proportional media visibility?
- In what ways are women athletes represented differently from male athletes?
- What structural barriers restrict women's participation in sports journalism and media leadership?
- How do commercial considerations contribute to the marginalization of women's sports?
- How do gender, race, class, sexuality and gender expression intersect in determining media visibility?
- Can digital and social media reduce the historical marginalization of women in sports?
- What institutional reforms are necessary to achieve substantive gender equality in sports media?

4. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative, conceptual and analytical research design. It is based primarily on secondary sources, including peer-reviewed academic literature, longitudinal studies of sports-media coverage, institutional reports and research dealing with gender and media.

The analytical approach combines insights from:

Sociology of Sport

Sociology of Media

Feminist Sociology

Gender Studies

Intersectionality Theory

Agenda-Setting Theory

Framing Theory

Political Economy of Media

Particular attention is given to empirical studies examining television, newspapers, online sports media and sports journalism organizations. The paper also draws upon UNESCO's institutional research and recommendations concerning gender equality in media.

The methodology is therefore not intended to generate primary statistical findings but to synthesize existing evidence and develop a sociological interpretation of women's marginalization in the sports media industry.

5. Conceptualizing Marginalization

Marginalization refers to a social process through which individuals or groups are pushed toward the periphery of social, economic, political or cultural institutions. Marginalized groups may formally possess rights and opportunities while remaining disadvantaged in access to resources, recognition, authority and decision-making.

In the context of sports media, marginalization has at least five dimensions:

5.1 Quantitative marginalization

Women receive less media space, airtime, headlines, commentary, photographs and digital engagement than men.

5.2 Qualitative marginalization

Even when women receive coverage, their achievements may be framed differently. Personal life, appearance, family, sexuality or femininity may receive disproportionate attention.

5.3 Occupational marginalization

Women may experience restricted access to sports journalism, commentary, reporting, photography, production and technical positions.

5.4 Organizational marginalization

Women remain underrepresented in senior editorial, managerial and decision-making positions.

5.5 Symbolic marginalization

Women's sporting achievements may be treated as less commercially valuable, less prestigious or less culturally significant than men's achievements.

Thus, marginalization is not equivalent merely to "absence." A group can be visible and still marginalized if its representation is stereotypical, subordinate or controlled by others.

6. Historical Foundations of Gender Inequality in Sports Media

Modern sport developed historically within predominantly male institutional structures. Physical strength, competitiveness, aggression and endurance were culturally associated with masculinity, while femininity was traditionally associated with beauty, domesticity, emotionality and motherhood.

Consequently, women's participation in competitive sport was often represented as socially problematic. Certain sports were regarded as appropriate for women, while others were considered incompatible with femininity.

The growth of women's participation challenged these assumptions, but institutional cultures changed more slowly.

Research on media coverage following Title IX in the United States illustrates this contradiction. Although women's participation in sport expanded significantly after the legislation, media inequality persisted. Research examining sports journalism has found that historical narratives sometimes framed gains in women's sport as occurring at the expense of men's sport rather than as an expansion of equality.

The historical legacy remains significant because contemporary media organizations inherited institutional practices, professional networks and definitions of sporting importance that were largely constructed around men's sport.

7. Unequal Media Representation of Women's Sports

One of the most visible forms of marginalization is the quantitative disparity in coverage.

A substantial body of research has documented that men's sports dominate television sports news and highlight programmes. Cooky, Messner and Musto's longitudinal research found that women's sports continued to receive very limited coverage, despite the dramatic expansion of girls' and women's participation in sport.

Their subsequent longitudinal study covering 1989–2019 found little fundamental change in the proportion of coverage allocated to women's and men's sports. Men's sports continued to receive the overwhelming majority of coverage, while women's stories were frequently isolated instances surrounded by numerous longer men's stories.

This pattern demonstrates the difference between formal equality and substantive equality.

A media organization may claim that women's sports are "covered" because a women's event occasionally appears. However, equality requires consideration of:

frequency of coverage;

length of coverage;

placement;

headline prominence;

quality of photography;

expert commentary;

promotional investment;

repetition;

pre-event coverage;

live broadcasting;

post-event analysis.

Consequently, simply counting whether women appear in the media can conceal substantial inequality.

8. The "One-and-Done" Phenomenon

One particularly significant pattern is what researchers have described as a "one-and-done" form of coverage.

A women's sports story may appear once but is quickly displaced by multiple stories concerning men's sports. This creates an illusion of inclusion while maintaining structural inequality.

The significance of this phenomenon lies in agenda-setting.

Media do not simply tell audiences what happened; they influence what audiences consider important. If men's sports occupy the majority of headlines, prime-time broadcasts, front pages and expert discussions, audiences gradually learn to associate sporting importance with men's sport.

Thus:

Media visibility → audience attention → commercial value → sponsorship → further media visibility.

The reverse cycle can also occur:

Low visibility → low audience perception → limited commercial investment → reduced media interest → continued low visibility.

This creates a structural feedback loop that reproduces marginalization.

9. Gender Stereotyping and the Representation of Women Athletes

Quantity is only one dimension of inequality. The quality of representation is equally important.

Women athletes are frequently represented through gendered narratives. Their athletic competence may be accompanied by discussions of:

physical appearance;

attractiveness;

clothing;

relationships;

motherhood;

family responsibilities;

femininity;

sexuality.

Research has repeatedly documented this tendency. A review of women's sport and the sport-media-commercial complex found that women athletes were often underrepresented and were less likely to be celebrated solely for athletic ability, with attention frequently directed toward appearance, femininity and heterosexuality.

This produces a double standard.

A male athlete is typically evaluated primarily according to:

performance + statistics + records + strategy + competitiveness.

A female athlete may be evaluated through:

performance + appearance + personality + family + femininity + sexuality.

The result is a symbolic reduction of athletic identity.

10. Sexualization and Objectification

Sexualization represents another important mechanism of marginalization.

Objectification occurs when an individual is treated primarily as a body or visual object rather than as a complete social actor. In sports media, this may occur through photographic choices, headlines, descriptions and narratives that emphasize women's bodies rather than sporting achievements.

The problem is not simply that women are shown attractively. Rather, the sociological concern is that the athletic body is transformed into a sexualized commodity.

This can produce contradictory expectations:

women must demonstrate exceptional physical strength;
yet they are expected to remain conventionally feminine;
they must be competitive;
yet not appear excessively aggressive;
they must possess athletic bodies;
yet avoid being represented as insufficiently feminine.

Such contradictions reflect what feminist sports scholars have identified as the tension between athletic competence and conventional femininity.

11. Motherhood and the Feminine Identity

Although earlier sports media frequently sexualized women athletes, contemporary coverage may sometimes construct a more socially acceptable image through motherhood.

The problem is not the recognition of motherhood itself. The problem arises when motherhood becomes disproportionately important in defining an athlete's identity.

A male athlete can often be a father without fatherhood becoming the central explanation of his athletic identity. Women athletes, by contrast, may be presented through narratives such as "mother and champion" or "balancing motherhood and sport."

Research on televised sports coverage has identified the increasing prominence of motherhood narratives as one of the qualitative changes accompanying the decline of some older forms of sexualized representation.

Thus, the stereotype may change while the underlying gendered logic remains.

12. Women as Sports Media Professionals

Marginalization does not end with the representation of athletes. Women themselves remain underrepresented within the sports-media workforce.

Sports journalism historically developed as a male occupational domain. Professional networks, newsroom cultures, informal relationships and assumptions about sporting expertise often privileged men.

Women working in sports journalism may experience:

exclusion from informal professional networks;
questioning of their sporting knowledge;
unequal assignments;
restricted access to prestigious beats;
pay disparities;
sexual harassment;
online abuse;
limited promotion;
tokenism;
pressure to prove competence repeatedly.

The recent systematic review of research on gender inequality in sports journalism confirms that male-dominated newsrooms, discriminatory conditions, harassment and exclusion remain significant research themes.

This is especially important because who produces media affects what is produced.

Greater diversity among journalists does not automatically guarantee equality, but the absence of women from decision-making positions makes transformation considerably more difficult.

13. Tokenism and the "Token Woman"

The presence of a few women in sports journalism can sometimes create the appearance of equality without producing structural change.

This phenomenon can be understood through the concept of tokenism.

A token woman may be highly visible but institutionally isolated. She may become responsible for representing "women's perspectives" while the broader organization remains male dominated. Research explicitly examining "forgotten athletes and token reporters" found substantial inequalities in both women's sports coverage and professional opportunities for women in sports journalism across the United States, United Kingdom and Australia.

Tokenism therefore differs from genuine inclusion.

Tokenism asks:

"Do we have a woman?"

Equality asks:

"How many women have institutional power, professional security and decision-making authority?"

14. Intersectionality: Not All Women Experience Marginalization in the Same Way

Gender cannot be analysed in isolation.

Intersectionality, associated particularly with Kimberlé Crenshaw's theoretical intervention, emphasizes that social identities and systems of inequality intersect.

A woman athlete may experience marginalization based simultaneously on:

gender;
race;
caste;

class;
ethnicity;
nationality;
disability;
sexuality;
religion;
gender expression.

Research on online sports media narratives provides empirical support for this intersectional approach. A study of WNBA coverage found that Black women athletes received less media attention than white women athletes, and Black athletes who did not conform to traditionally feminine gender expression received the least attention.

This finding is particularly important because it demonstrates that "women's representation" is not a homogeneous category.

For example, the media visibility available to an affluent, internationally celebrated white tennis player may differ substantially from that available to a working-class Black woman athlete, a South Asian woman athlete, a disabled athlete or an athlete whose gender expression challenges conventional femininity.

15. The Political Economy of Sports Media

A sociological analysis must also examine the economic structure of sports media.

Media organizations operate within commercial markets. They seek audiences, advertising revenue, sponsorships, subscriptions and digital engagement.

Women's sports can therefore become trapped in a commercial paradox:

Women's sports receive limited investment.

Limited investment produces lower visibility.

Lower visibility is interpreted as evidence of weak audience demand.

Lower perceived demand discourages further investment.

Limited investment continues.

This is not necessarily a reflection of inherent consumer preferences. Preferences are themselves socially produced.

Audiences cannot develop strong attachment to sporting events they rarely see.

Therefore, the statement "women's sports do not attract audiences" can become a circular justification for unequal investment.

16. Media, Sponsorship and the Visibility Economy

In contemporary sport, visibility has economic value.

Sponsors seek athletes and competitions capable of delivering:

brand recognition;
audience engagement;
social-media reach;

television exposure;

consumer loyalty.

When media visibility is unequal, sponsorship opportunities also become unequal.

This creates a visibility economy in which media representation influences the economic resources available to athletes.

The relationship can be represented as:

Media coverage → Visibility → Audience → Sponsorship → Revenue → Investment → Better media production → Greater visibility

Women are disadvantaged when they enter this cycle with substantially lower media exposure.

UNESCO has specifically identified the lack of media coverage and sponsorship as factors perpetuating women's invisibility in football.

17. Digital Media: Challenge and Opportunity

Digital media have disrupted traditional sports-media gatekeeping.

Athletes can now communicate directly with audiences through:

Instagram;

YouTube;

X;

podcasts;

personal websites;

streaming;

short-form video;

digital newsletters.

This potentially reduces dependence upon traditional sports journalists.

Women athletes can construct their own narratives rather than waiting for mainstream media to construct them.

Digital media have also contributed to the growth of women's sports communities and fan cultures.

However, digitalization does not automatically eliminate inequality.

Women journalists and athletes face online abuse and harassment. UNESCO reports that 73% of women journalists surveyed in its gender-and-media work had experienced online violence in the course of their work.

Therefore, digital media can simultaneously function as:

a democratizing technology and a new arena of gendered violence.

18. Social Media and the Commodification of the Female Athlete

Social media create another contradiction.

Women athletes can gain enormous visibility independently of traditional media. However, algorithms frequently reward visual content, personal branding and engagement-oriented material.

Consequently, athletes may feel pressure to construct commercially attractive identities alongside athletic identities.

The contemporary sportswoman may therefore become simultaneously:
athlete;
influencer;
celebrity;
brand ambassador;
entrepreneur;
content creator.

This can create opportunities but may also reproduce the expectation that women's commercial value is linked to appearance and personality rather than sporting achievement.

Recent research on media narratives surrounding college athletes in the Name, Image and Likeness era similarly found that coverage sometimes emphasized women's social-media followings, lifestyle or appearance rather than their sporting value.

19. The Indian Context

The Indian sports-media environment provides an especially significant field for examining gender, media and social change.

India has witnessed the emergence of internationally successful women athletes in:

badminton;
boxing;
wrestling;
weightlifting;
shooting;
athletics;
cricket;
hockey;
archery.

Athletes such as P. V. Sindhu, Mary Kom, Saina Nehwal, Mirabai Chanu, Sakshi Malik and numerous others have challenged conventional assumptions concerning women and competitive sport.

Women's cricket has also undergone substantial institutional and commercial expansion. The growth of women's professional competitions demonstrates that women's sport can generate audiences, sponsorship and cultural enthusiasm when appropriate institutional investment is made. Yet the historical dominance of men's cricket in Indian sports media illustrates the importance of structural inequality.

Indian sports journalism has traditionally been strongly influenced by the commercial popularity of cricket, and the overwhelming attention devoted to men's cricket can crowd out other sports, including women's sport.

Therefore, the Indian situation should not be reduced to the claim that "women's sports are unpopular." Rather, it requires analysis of:

media ownership;

advertising;
broadcasting rights;
sponsorship;
newsroom culture;
celebrity culture;
audience construction;
digital algorithms;
gender norms.

The Indian case also requires attention to caste, class, region, language and rural–urban inequalities.

20. Patriarchy and Sports Media

The concept of patriarchy provides a broader theoretical framework.

Patriarchy refers to institutional and cultural systems in which men historically possess disproportionate authority and control over resources.

In sports media, patriarchy can operate through:

male-dominated ownership;
male-dominated editorial leadership;
informal professional networks;
assumptions concerning men's sporting expertise;
definitions of commercially valuable sports;
gendered employment practices;
stereotypes concerning female athletes.

Importantly, patriarchy need not operate through explicit hostility toward women. It may operate through institutional routines.

For example, an editor may select men's sport not because he consciously opposes women's sport but because:

"This is what our audience wants."

Yet audience expectations may themselves have been created through decades of unequal media exposure.

Thus, patriarchy can reproduce itself through apparently neutral professional practices.

21. Agenda-Setting and Framing

Two media theories are particularly useful.

21.1 Agenda-setting theory

Agenda-setting proposes that media influence the importance audiences attach to issues.

If women's sport is rarely covered, audiences may perceive it as less important.

If men's sport dominates the sports section, men become normalized as the central sporting subjects.

21.2 Framing theory

Framing concerns how media define and interpret events.

The same achievement can be framed differently.

For example:

Male athlete:

"Champion breaks national record through extraordinary discipline."

Female athlete:

"Young mother balances family responsibilities to win championship."

Both statements may be positive, but the second introduces a gendered frame that would often be unnecessary in reporting a male athlete.

Framing therefore influences the cultural meaning attached to women's athletic achievement.

22. Symbolic Annihilation

The concept of symbolic annihilation is particularly useful in understanding women's sports media. Symbolic annihilation refers to the absence, trivialization or stereotyping of a group within media representation.

Women's sport can experience all three:

Absence

The sport is not covered.

Trivialization

It receives shorter or less prestigious coverage.

Stereotyping

Women athletes are represented primarily through gendered characteristics.

The significance of symbolic annihilation is profound because media representation contributes to social recognition.

What is invisible becomes easier to ignore.

23. Consequences of Marginalization

The marginalization of women in sports media produces consequences at several levels.

23.1 Individual level

Women athletes may experience reduced recognition, sponsorship and career opportunities.

23.2 Institutional level

Women's sports organizations may receive fewer commercial resources.

23.3 Cultural level

Society receives the message that men's sport is more important.

23.4 Educational level

Girls may encounter fewer visible female sporting role models.

23.5 Economic level

Reduced visibility may contribute to lower earning opportunities.

23.6 Political level

Women's sporting achievements receive less symbolic recognition within national culture.

Therefore, media inequality has consequences beyond journalism. It contributes to broader gender inequality.

24. Women Sports Journalists and Online Harassment

The expansion of digital journalism has created additional risks.

Women sports journalists may face:

sexist comments;

threats;

sexual harassment;

trolling;

questioning of competence;

appearance-based criticism;

coordinated online abuse.

Such harassment can have a chilling effect.

A journalist may become reluctant to cover controversial sporting issues, participate in social media discussions or develop a strong professional public identity.

Thus, online violence can become a mechanism of professional exclusion.

It does not merely hurt individuals; it can discourage women from entering or remaining in sports journalism.

25. The Problem of Leadership

Representation at entry level is insufficient.

A sustainable transformation requires women in:

editorial leadership;

sports-media ownership;

broadcasting management;

production;

commissioning;

programming;

newsroom decision-making;

digital strategy;

sports administration.

UNESCO's broader analysis of gender equality in media has emphasized continuing inequalities in the profession and weak representation of women in decision-making roles.

Leadership matters because those who control institutional resources influence:

recruitment;

editorial policy;

story selection;

budgets;

promotion;

professional culture.

Therefore, representation without power can reproduce tokenism.

26. Towards Gender-Equitable Sports Media

Addressing marginalization requires systemic rather than symbolic reform.

26.1 Gender-balanced recruitment

Media organizations should establish transparent recruitment and promotion systems.

26.2 Women in leadership

Organizations should create measurable targets for women's representation in senior positions.

26.3 Equal coverage

Editorial policies should establish systematic monitoring of men's and women's sports coverage.

26.4 Gender-sensitive journalism

Journalists should receive training concerning stereotypes, sexualization and intersectionality.

26.5 Equal production investment

Women's sport requires investment in cameras, commentary teams, promotion, digital production and broadcasting.

26.6 Safety mechanisms

Organizations must provide effective mechanisms against workplace and online harassment.

26.7 Data transparency

Media organizations should publish gender-disaggregated data on:

airtime;

stories;

salaries;

leadership;

expert appearances;

commentary.

26.8 Ethical advertising

Sponsors should avoid reducing female athletes to appearance-based commodities.

27. Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Establish gender-equity media audits

Sports-media organizations should conduct annual audits measuring the proportion and prominence of men's and women's coverage.

2. Increase women's leadership

Gender equality should extend beyond recruitment to editorial and managerial authority.

3. Create institutional accountability

Gender-equity targets should be linked to organizational performance indicators.

4. Develop specialist women's sports desks

Dedicated teams can increase expertise, continuity and editorial visibility.

5. Improve safety

Strong institutional procedures should address workplace and online harassment.

6. Promote intersectional representation

Media organizations should ensure visibility for women across race, caste, class, disability, sexuality, region and nationality.

7. Reform journalistic language

Coverage should prioritize athletic performance over appearance and personal relationships.

8. Increase live broadcasting

Women's competitions require regular live coverage rather than occasional event-based reporting.

9. Encourage sponsorship

Public and private sponsors should recognize women's sport as a commercially viable sector.

10. Introduce media-literacy education

Schools and universities should teach students to identify gender stereotypes in sports media.

11. Support women entering sports journalism

Scholarships, internships, mentorship and professional networks can help overcome historical barriers.

12. Use digital platforms strategically

Women athletes and women's sports organizations should develop independent digital media ecosystems.

28. Conclusion

The marginalization of women in the sports media industry is not merely a problem of insufficient coverage. It is a structural phenomenon involving representation, employment, professional authority, economic resources, organizational culture and symbolic power.

Existing evidence demonstrates a persistent imbalance. Women's sports continue to receive a small proportion of media coverage, while women remain underrepresented in sports journalism and decision-making. UNESCO has identified the extremely low proportion of sports-media content devoted to women's sport, while longitudinal academic research demonstrates that the quantitative imbalance has persisted across decades.

The problem is also qualitative. Women athletes may be sexualized, trivialized or represented through motherhood, appearance and femininity rather than athletic excellence. Women journalists may encounter discrimination, harassment, tokenism and exclusion.

An intersectional perspective further reveals that not all women experience media marginalization in the same manner. Race, class, sexuality, disability, nationality and gender expression influence visibility and professional opportunities.

Nevertheless, the situation is not static. The growth of women's sport, digital media, social-media communities, professional women's leagues and changing audience behaviour create opportunities for transformation. The increasing visibility of women's competitions demonstrates that audiences can be developed when institutions provide adequate investment and exposure.

The central argument of this paper is therefore that women's sports should not be regarded as a marginal category requiring occasional inclusion within a fundamentally male sports-media system. Rather, gender equality requires restructuring the system itself.

The objective should not simply be to "add more women" to sports media. It should be to transform the criteria through which sporting value is defined, the institutional structures through which media decisions are made, and the cultural assumptions through which athletic achievement is interpreted.

In this sense, gender equality in sports media is both a question of social justice and a question of democratic representation.

A genuinely equitable sports-media industry will exist when women's sporting achievements are considered newsworthy not because they are exceptional "for women," but because they are exceptional sporting achievements.

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